

## The Lord Confirms to Abraham

### That He Would Have a Son

#### Genesis 15:1-6

Genesis 15:1-6 - *“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”* <sup>2</sup> *But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”* <sup>3</sup> *Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”*

<sup>4</sup> *And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”* <sup>5</sup> *Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”* <sup>6</sup> *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”*

#### Background Notes

Verse 1: *“After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram.”* After *what* things? After the events of chapter 14, when Abram and his small band of men defeated the army of the four kings of the east and rescued Lot, who had been captured. After this victory, Abram refused the king of Sodom’s offer of earthly wealth.

In this context then, the Lord said to Abram, *“Do not be afraid.”* Abram may have feared retaliation from the four kings whom he had defeated. After all, it would have been easy for them to re-group, return, and take vengeance on Abram. But the Lord encouraged Abram by saying, *“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”* In essence God said, “I will protect you, Abram. Furthermore, because you have honored Me by turning down the king of Sodom’s worldly offer, I am your exceedingly great reward!”

Then Abram raised the question about his lack of progeny (v2). He had no heir. In chapter 12 God had promised that He would make a great nation from Abram, but Abram was still childless - and at this point he was in his eighties! In that day, having no children was thought to be a divine judgment, so Abram was unable to understand the situation.

When Abram said, *“the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus,”* he was referring to his head servant, Eliezer. In those days if a man had no children, he might make a trusted servant his adopted heir. This custom is documented in the Nuzi Tablets - ancient documents from the Near East that affirm the accuracy of this Scripture. However, the Lord told Abram

that Eliezer would not be his heir. Abram's heir would come "from his own body." His heir would be Abram's own child, from his own seed.

The Lord confirmed His promise with two object lessons. In chapter 13 the Lord told Abram to count the dust of the earth, and promised that his descendants would be like the dust - innumerable! In chapter 15 the Lord told him to "Count the stars... so shall your descendants be!" - another illustration to show that Abram's descendants would be innumerable!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God promises the believer His protection and His reward.

The Lord told Abram not to be afraid, because "**I am** your shield." On many occasions in the Bible the Lord God told His people not to be afraid, and this is the first "Fear not!" in the Bible!

Notice that God **didn't** say, "Abram, I will give you a good shield with which you can protect yourself." No! He said, "Don't be afraid, Abram, because **I am** your shield!" Now that's a **great** shield! In fact, there is no greater shield or protection than the Lord Himself! This promise is just as good for believers today. God Himself is our shield of protection. God said, "Fear not!" at the time of the Exodus. In His "pillar of cloud and fire" God went behind the children of Israel to shield and protect them from the pursuing Egyptians (Exodus 14). God Himself was their shield and protection.

In addition, God promises the believer His reward. "Abraham, not only will I protect you, but I will give you a great reward - a very great reward. "**I am** your exceedingly great reward!" A great reward from God is a **very** great reward - wouldn't you agree? Rewards don't get any greater than that! God promises the believer His protection and His reward.

You might be thinking, "Well, Dave, I understand that we will ultimately receive our great reward when we get to Heaven. But what about our great shield of protection - is that for the present time?" Yes, God's shield of protection is ours **now** - we won't need protection in Heaven!

But if the Lord is our "great shield of protection," why do believers have accidents – sometimes even fatal accidents? What's the answer? Read the book of Job. God had His protective shield ("hedge" of protection) around Job, but God allowed that "hedge" to be partially removed for a time. Why? So that Job's faith could mature. The trials of Job's faith involved some apparent "accidents" - and much suffering.

Sometimes God lowers the shield of protection that He has placed around each one of us. Sometimes He allows "accidents" or unpleasant experiences - and many times they're extremely painful experiences.

But here is the teaching point: **we can be sure that God knows everything that is happening, and He is in control!**

God “filters” **everything** that happens to a believer. That’s the truth of the Word of God. Yes, it takes faith to believe that God is always in control and that He’s always working for our good. And it’s especially hard to remember that when we’re going through painful experiences - but this is what the Bible teaches. God promises the believer His protection and His reward.

## 2. God credits the believer with His imputed righteousness.

One of the great doctrines of the Bible is found in verse 6: the doctrine of “justification by faith.” *“And he [Abram] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”* This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament - in Romans 4, Galatians 3, and James 2. Romans 4:2-3: *“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’”*

The point of these Scriptures is that good works do not save a person, and Abraham is a prime example of that truth! He simply believed God, and God accounted it to him - or “reckoned” it to him, or “imputed” it to him - as righteousness. What does the word “impute” mean? It means to credit your account. Because Abraham believed God, God credited his faith to “Abraham’s account” as righteousness.

The believer’s “charge account with God” is credited with righteousness – but it’s not our own righteousness. A believer’s account is credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, because with His perfect sacrifice He paid all the charges that our sins had piled up on our accounts!

Look at Romans 4:20-25, where this verse is quoted again: *“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”*

Notice - we are credited with righteousness - **not** because we earn it by our own good works, and **not** because we were brought up in the church - but because we believe *“in Him who raised Jesus from the dead”!*

Are you a believer? From Romans 4:24-25, do you believe that the Lord Jesus was delivered up to death because of your offenses, and was raised for your justification? And do you believe in the God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead? If that’s not the basic content of your faith, then you are not a believer.

But if you can say from your heart that Romans 4:24-25 is the basic content of your faith, then you are a believer. Your “charge account” with God has been stamped “Justified”! Paid in full – by Jesus Christ! You have been made righteous, not by your own attempts to become righteous, but by the imputed righteousness of God in Christ. God credits the believer with His imputed righteousness.

## Practical Application

### It’s OK to question God.

You may be thinking that it’s *wrong* to question God. Yes, it’s wrong to question God if you have a bad attitude - but it is not wrong to question God if you have the right attitude. Abram questioned God about why he had no children, and he was not rebuked. He was rewarded with answers.

Notice that Abram didn’t go to God with an unbelieving heart, or with a defiant and rebellious or angry or bitter attitude. No, Abram essentially told God, “I don’t understand, Lord. You promised me I’d have many descendants. I’m getting old, and Sarah is getting old, and we still have no child. Did you mean that Eliezer, my servant, was to be my adopted heir? Lord, please help me to understand.” It was OK for Abraham to come with that humble kind of attitude and ask questions of God.

Like Abram, it’s OK for us to ask questions of God, too - *if* we come to Him in the right way! If you’re suffering, you might come humbly to the Lord and say something like this: “Lord I don’t know why you have allowed this awful pain and turmoil to come into my life, and I’m having a hard time seeing how this is really part of your overall plan for good in my life. Please give me some understanding.”

Or perhaps you’re having a hard time understanding a difficult doctrine in God’s Word – maybe the teachings about the roles of men and women in the Church. You can go to the Lord with a humble, teachable attitude (not with defiance or anger) and say, “Lord, I can’t understand this teaching. I need some help understanding why You would choose to design these different roles. Please give me insight!”

With the right attitude, it’s OK to question God!