



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### Talk Genesis 15:1-6: Abraham Believed God, and God Accounted it to him for Righteousness

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#### Lesson 32

In this first section of Genesis 15 we have the Lord's confirmation to Abram that he would definitely have a son. We also have one of the great doctrinal statements of the Bible: "*And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*"(v6).

*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." 2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" 4 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." 5 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." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

#### Background Notes

In verse 1, we read that "after these things," the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. After what things? After the events of chapter 14 -- you remember what took place in chapter 14, right? Abram and his small band of men defeated the army of the four kings of the east, then rescued Lot, who had been captured. Following this victory, Abram refused to be enriched by the worldly offers of the king of Sodom.

In this context then, we see why the Lord said to Abram, "*do not be afraid*" (v1). Abram may have feared the retaliation of the four kings that had been defeated. After all, it would be 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, "I will protect you, Abram. Furthermore, because you have honored Me by turning down those worldly offers of the king of Sodom, **I** am your exceedingly great reward!"

In verse 2 Abram raised the question about his lack of progeny – he had no heir. Back in chapter 12 God had promised that He would make of Abram a great nation -- but Abram was still childless, and at this point he was in his eighties! Having no children in that day was thought to be a divine judgment, so Abram was unable to understand the situation.

When Abraham said "*the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus,*" he was referring to his servant, Eliezer. In those days if a man had no children, he might make a servant his adopted heir. This custom is documented in an extra-biblical source known as the Nuzi

tablets. The Nuzi tablets are ancient documents from the Near East that affirm the accuracy of this Scripture.

The Lord told Abram that Eliezer would not be his heir (v4). Abram's heir would come "from his own body" -- that is, the heir would be Abram's own child, from his own seed. The Lord confirmed His promise with an object lesson. Back in chapter 13 the Lord told Abram to count the dust of the earth, and promised that so would his descendants be -- that is, innumerable! Now in chapter 15 the Lord told Abram to count the stars. "Count the stars, if you're able! So shall your descendants be -- your descendants will 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." There are a number of times in the Bible where God tells his people not to be afraid. This is the first "Fear not!" in the Bible. Notice what God **didn't** say. He 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 pretty good shield, right? In fact, there is no greater shield -- no greater protection than the Lord Himself! This promise is certainly good for us today as well. God Himself is our shield of protection.

Do you remember at the time of the Exodus, how God in His "pillar of cloud" went behind the children of Israel to shield and protect them from the pursuing Egyptians (Exodus 14)? The same truth is taught in both accounts: God promises the believer His 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, an 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.

The question you might have at this point would be, "Well, Dave, I understand that our great reward is ultimately in the future when we get to heaven, but what about our great shield of protection -- is that for the present? time" Of course we won't need protection in heaven, so the protection is now. But if the Lord is our "great shield of protection," then why do believers have accidents? Or even get killed? What is the answer here? Read the book of Job. In the book of Job we see that God did have His protective shield, or "hedge" of protection, around Job, but He allowed it to be partially removed for a time so that Job could mature in the faith. The trials of Job's faith involved some "accidents" and much suffering. In the same way, you see, God sometimes lowers the shield of protection that He has about us, and He allows us to go through some experiences that are unpleasant --and many times they're painful. But here is the teaching point -- we can be sure that God **knows**, and He is **in control**! God "filters" **everything** that happens to a believer. That is the truth of the Word of God. Yes, it takes faith to believe that God is always in control, and He's always working for our good, 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.**

In verse 6 we have one of the great doctrines of the Bible: "justification by faith." *"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."* Did you know that this verse is quoted three times in the New Testament? It's repeated in Romans 4, Galatians 3, and in James 2. Let's look at the quote in Romans 4:2-3, *"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 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. He just 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. The believer's charge account with God is credited with righteousness. Not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, because He paid all the charges of your sins with His perfect sacrifice.

Let's move on in Romans 4, where this verse is quoted once again. I'm reading from verse 20: *"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."*

Notice that we are credited with righteousness **not** because we earn it by our own good works, and not because we were brought up as Christians, but because we believe "in Him who raised Jesus from the dead"! Are you a believer? Again, from Romans 4:24-25, do you believe in the God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead? And do you believe that the Lord Jesus was delivered up to death because of your offenses and was raised for your justification? Is that the basic content of your faith? If it isn't, then you are not a believer. But if you can say from your heart that this is the basic content of your faith, then you are a believer. Your "charge account" with God has been stamped "Justified"! 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.**

"Wait a minute!" you may say. "I thought that it was wrong to question God!" It **is** wrong to question God if you have the wrong attitude, but it is not wrong to question God if you have the right attitude. Abraham questioned God, and he was not rebuked. He was rewarded with answers. Notice, Abraham didn't come to God with an unbelieving heart or with a defiant and rebellious or angry and bitter attitude. No, Abraham essentially told God he didn't understand. "Lord, you promised me descendants. I'm getting old, Sarah is getting old, and we still have no child. Did you mean that Eliezer, my servant, was to be my adopted heir? Lord, help me to understand." We see that it was OK for Abraham to come with that kind of attitude and ask questions of God.

The same is true for us. It's OK to ask questions of God -- if we come to Him in the right way. "Lord I don't know why you have allowed this suffering to come into my life, and I'm having a hard time seeing how this is really part of your overall plan for my life. Please give me some understanding." Or perhaps you're having a hard time understanding a difficult doctrine in God's Word. "Lord, I can't understand this teaching about distinctive

roles of men and women in the church. I need some help understanding why You designed these different roles. Please give me insight!" With the right attitude, it's OK to question God!