

Date : 12 March 2023
Theme : The men who walked by Faith
Topic : Abraham's Going on faith – Overcoming doubts and fears
Key passage : *Genesis 15*
Key verse : *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. Genesis 15:1(NKJV)*

Introduction

Every journey of faith needs to progress to the next level of change, so that stagnation does not set in. However, life has a way of throwing a spanner at our works, causing problems to our plans. Believers who have stepped out in faith to follow God are fazed when road blocks happen along the way. *Why this road block? Why this waiting?*

The common reaction is fear – our enemy within. We lack confidence because we do not know what the next step is. We forget that obstacles are there, not to distract us, but to direct us back to God. Every setback is God's comeback message to advance our journey of faith, in the Lord our God. The question is *How?*

Man's problem: Fear, like a killer whale of faith, brings darkness over our soul.

Abram's journey shows us how he overcame fears and doubts.

1. What situation produced the fears? *Genesis 15:1-3*

a) Abram's fear of enemy retribution

- After a great victory / battle

Abram had defeated a coalition of 4 kings.

He had reason to be afraid, expecting vengeance from them.

God addressed his fears by His Word:

...do not be afraid... ...I am your shield ... I am your exceedingly great reward Genesis 15:1

- God promised

- His Protection – he needed God as his shield against attack

- His Provision – he had rejected man's reward offered by the king of Sodom *Genesis 14:21-24*

- Abram could never outgive God because God's reward would be exceedingly great.

...Abram gave... a tenth of everything... Genesis 14:20

b) Abram's frustration over God's apparent delay in fulfilling his desire

- Abram fretted over God's delay *...Lord, You have given me no offspring... Genesis 15:3*

He desires (not denies) God's promise. He looks to God to strengthen his faith.

- Abram felt honest emptiness

God's promise of material reward sounded irrelevant to his real need...

What good is this reward if I do not have a son to pass on to?

This pressure would build up for the next 10 years, to a point when, at his wife's suggestion, he would take matters into his own hands instead of waiting for God's move.

c) Problem: Have my fears loomed larger than the Lord Himself?

Abram experienced *...horror and great darkness... Genesis 15: 12*

Godly men in the past have called this *the dark night of the soul*. What is this about? There will be periods in your life when you cannot feel God's presence. Because we depend a lot on feelings, we lose confidence. Instead of trusting His Word, we may seek for signs or words from people.

2. God's solution – His word comes with a promise

a) God's antidote: Faith comes by hearing and hearing by God's word

...The word of the Lord came to Abram... *Genesis 15:1*

What word? ...I AM...

- God's double signature

...I AM your shield (protection)

...I AM your exceedingly great reward (provision)

- Protection (shield): There will not be another battle against an external enemy
- Provision (reward): I will be your help in the next battle – your internal enemy – fear

√ We must discipline our hearts to read, meditate and believe His Word daily.

When fear comes, we will not be in the mood to hear.

b) God confirmed His promise of offspring with an object lesson.

...count the stars... *so shall your offspring be. Genesis 15:5*

God's answer: I promise!

Your descendants would be innumerable like the stars (invisible only in the darkness).

c) God credited righteousness to Abram's account. *Genesis 15:6*

i) What was Abram's faith?

Abram put his trust specifically in God's promise to give him, numerically, countless descendants as the stars in the sky. God credited this faith to Abram's account as righteousness.

Abram's response was pleasing to God. *Genesis 15:6*

...believed the Lord (believe = to put your whole weight upon) *Genesis 15:6*

ii) Why / How did God credit this faith to Abram's account as righteousness?

...Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to Him as righteousness... *Genesis 15:6*

Righteousness is accounted to us by the work of God when we believe.

Why? Without righteousness, there is no salvation = no covenant relation with God.

Faith is always pegged to covenant.

iii) This is the first time the word *believe* is used in the Bible.

- The phrase ...He accounted it to him for righteousness... is repeated in the New Testament:

Romans 4:1-3 Abraham's righteousness did not come from performing good works, but from his belief in God.

Galatians 3:6-7 Abraham, an example of being righteous before God, by faith and not by faith plus works.

d) God confirmed His covenant with Abram to give him land. *Genesis 15:7-8*

- God promised the land *Genesis 15:7*

Why is this promise relevant to faith?

Why is the promise of the Lord a sign?

- The land was governed by 30 kings
- The land would always belong to Abram's descendants

(They only lose occupation if they broke covenant, but it would be returned to them eventually).

e) God cut covenant by a sign *Genesis 15:9-11*

To Abram's question ...*how shall I know I will inherit it?*

- Abram had no title deed to the land. All he had was God's covenant with him. *Genesis 15:9-11*

- The meaning behind covenant-cutting ceremony

Just as cutting of the heifer, the goat and ram into halves signify death, so death would follow as a penalty if the covenant was broken by either party.

Death is the basis – death to our own will to submit to the other party's will.

- Only God's blazing torch passed between the two halves of the sacrifice (Abram's role was to prepare the sacrifices but he did not walk through).

This was a unilateral covenant; God signed it for both of them in the ritual.

The terms of the covenant were not negotiable.

God would not fail to keep His obligation.

- Like Abram, we merely enter into the covenant by faith; we can accept or refuse His terms.

f) God promised Abram *Genesis 15:12-19*

- Abram's good old age. In fact he had 100 years ahead. *Genesis 15:15*

- Abram's descendants. To be given lands from the Nile to the Euphrates.

- They would spend 400 years in a foreign land but they would return to take possession.

Application

- What fears can you identify that pose a threat to your progress in your faith journey?

- in the past year

- in the coming year

- When you face a *darkness of the soul* experience, how have you handled it?