

The Lord GOD

2025-06-15 – Genesis 15

Pastor Matt Johnson

Good morning. First and foremost, we've got another baptism today. Yes. At the start of second service, after the first song, we'll have the baptism. That's when we're always going to have them, and so, praise the Lord for that! I also want to say, "Happy Father's Day" to all the dads out there! Yeah, okay, we can clap for all the dads. Thank you for the applause.

I want to encourage you men out there. We've got copies of the book Measure of a Man, and we have copies for all the men of our church. We've been going through that in Iron Man, and it's been a blessing. We want to give that as a gift to all the men of our church, so if you don't have a copy, please make sure to grab one when you leave.

With that, if you've got your Bibles, I want to invite you to open to Genesis 15 today. We are coming to an incredible passage in Scripture where, for the first time, we are going to see that someone believed God, and it was credited to them as righteousness. We are going to see a very specific name for God used that, whenever it's used in the Old Testament, it's a big deal, and we're going to see it used twice—the first two times it shows up in our Bible.

The LORD said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Genesis 12:1-3 CSB

As we jump into this series, I want to remind you of where we've been. We're in Genesis 15 today, but we started this series in Genesis 12:1-3 CSB, where the Lord said to Abram, a 75-year-old man who was childless and had a barren wife, **"Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."**

The last couple of weeks, we've been looking at the sovereignty of God and how, regardless of Abraham, what God has said and what God has promised, He will bring to completion. That's what it means that God is sovereign: what He has said He will do, He is in control. Today, we are going to see that come to a head. We are going to see how God regards Himself to Abram and how He declares and reveals His sovereignty in a very real way to Abraham, and it is going to give us hope for today.

The goal today is to look at this statement:

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true.

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Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true. It is a very simple statement: Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true. You might say, “Last year, Matt, you’ve talked about it the last three weeks. Are we just going to talk about this in a repetitive cycle?” Well,

- If Adam and Eve had trusted that what the Lord had said was true, they wouldn’t have eaten from the tree.
- If Cain had trusted, he would not have killed his brother. If the people in Noah’s day had trusted, the ark would have been full of people. (it wouldn’t have gotten to that point).
- If the people in Genesis 11 had trusted and believed that what the Lord had said was true, they wouldn’t have been scattered; we’d all speak the same language.
- We see that pattern extend: if the Israelites, when they went out of Egypt into the wilderness, had trusted the Lord, they wouldn’t have wandered 40 years.
- When they entered the Promised Land, they wouldn’t have lost their second battle if they had trusted the Lord.

I could keep going and keep going and keep going.

I know if you’re here, you’re a human, and if you’re a human, that means that even if you say, “I trust the Lord fully,” there are so many times we don’t. Sometimes, in my pride, I think in my own strength I can do what only the Lord can do, and often, in my pride, I am confident that I take things into my own hands in a way that ultimately makes them worse. If we would trust in the Lord on His terms, the way that He calls us to in the Lord, we would be blessed in this life—not that everything would go perfectly, but we would have the right mindset for whatever arises. But praise the Lord that the promises of the Lord are not built on us, but they are built on Him and what He has done, and that is what we are going to look at today in Genesis 15.

To that end, let’s pray.

Father in heaven, Lord, we thank You. Led to a world in death and darkness, You so loved the world that You sent Your one and only Son. We thank You that He lived a perfect life, He died on the cross for our sins, He rose from the grave, and He reigns in heaven. We thank You, Sovereign Lord, that in Your sovereignty, You sent Your Spirit to open our eyes to the truth of Your Word and to the good news of the gospel. I pray, Lord, that if anyone here does not know You, that today Your Spirit would open their eyes and bring them to life. I pray for all of us, Lord, that Your Spirit would be moving, that You would give us eyes to see and ears to hear what Your Word has to say. Father, I pray You would speak to me and speak through me, that these would be Your words and not mine. Lord, we thank You that You have revealed Yourself in a way that, when we study Your Word, it is evident that You are sovereign, You are in control, and You have regard for us, and out of Your great love, You have done so much. We pray all of this in the holy and precious name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

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Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true

The Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His word (1-6)

Our first point is: **The Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His Word.**
(1-6)

After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abram
I am your shield;
your reward will be very great.

But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”

Genesis 15:1-2 CSB

Genesis 15:1 begins, **“After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision.”** Before we keep reading, “after these events,” if you were here last week, we looked at a battle among nine kings. On the other side of that battle, Abram goes out and battles four of the kings to get his relative, Lot, his nephew, and returns him. He has victory because God has blessed him, and God will keep blessing him. When he returns, he has great spoils. He tithes to King Melchizedek—we’re not going to talk about that today; listen to last week’s sermon—but he tithes, and then he keeps going. The king of Sodom talks to him and says, “Hey, let me take the people, and you take all the possessions.” When we read that, we should read it as him attempting to make a treaty of some sort with Abram. Abram says, “No,” and in fact, in that moment, Abraham makes an oath, saying, “No, I’m never going to allow you to say, because I serve the Lord, the Most High God, that you’re the one who made me rich. I’m going to trust in Him.”

“After these events, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.’”

Now, Abram has just defeated four kings. He’s just rejected a treaty with the king, and the Lord is telling him, “I still have you. I promised you will be a great nation. You’re becoming one. Don’t worry about it. I am your shield,” and He says, “Your reward will be very great.”

But Abraham said, “Lord God, You say my reward will be great, but what can You give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”

Abram is saying, “Lord, it’s been about 10 years.” He left his father’s house at 75; he’s now probably right around 85. He’s like, “You say I’m going to be a great nation. You say my descendants will be like the dust of the earth, the clock is ticking.”

It’s here that we see the pattern this week.

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The LORD makes a promise:

After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abram
I am your shield;
your reward will be very great.

Abram questions it:

But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”

We’re going to see twice: **the Lord makes a promise or reinforces the promise He’s already made, and Abraham questions it.** You may think, “Well, how on earth? You should never question God,” but I want to tell you, the way Abram does it here is healthy. We would have richer prayer lives if we would pray the way Abraham prays here and talk to the Lord the way Abram talks to the Lord here.

Lord GOD Sovereign LORD

In English translations, both LORD and GOD are translations of Yahweh

When he says, “Lord God,” there’s something special happening in the Hebrew. If you notice, it’s “Lord” in capital L-O-R-D, lowercase “God”—“GOD” in capital letters in some translations like the CSV or ESV. Some translations render it “Sovereign Lord.” “Lord” is capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. In English translations, every time in the Old Testament you see “Lord” or “God” in all capitals, it refers to a specific name for the Lord: it is the name Yahweh.

If you remember in our John series, whenever Jesus said, “I AM,” He was linking Himself to Exodus when Moses says to God, “Who shall I tell them sent me?” and He says, “I AM Yahweh. I always was, I always will be, I always am. I have no beginning, I have no end. I AM Yahweh.” That is the name of the Lord.

Lord GOD Sovereign LORD

In English translations, both LORD and GOD are translations of Yahweh

The only time GOD occurs is when the word immediately in front of Yahweh is best translated as “lord” (most common in Ezekiel)

When Abram says, “Sovereign Lord,” we need to read it in that way. **The only time GOD occurs in English translations where “GOD” is all capital is where the word immediately in front of Yahweh is best translated “Lord” because they don’t want to put an English lowercase “lord” before capital “LORD.” It’s most common in books like**

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Ezekiel, and if you know your Bible well, Ezekiel is the book where God is saying, “Hey, I’ve already left the Promised Land. When you go into exile, I’m already here.” God is saying, “I am in control as the Babylonians come and destroy.” In that day, the people believed that when a temple was destroyed, it was a sign that God had no power, but God says, “I’m bringing the destroyers.”

When God talks about His sovereignty, He calls Himself “Sovereign Lord,” “Lord GOD,” that language.

Lord GOD Sovereign LORD

In English translations, both LORD and GOD are translations of Yahweh

The only time GOD occurs is when the word immediately in front of Yahweh is best translated as “lord” (most common in Ezekiel)

Abram is speaking his doubt while still acknowledging the sovereignty of the LORD in the matter at hand

As we go forward, we need to see this because **Abram is speaking his doubt in a humble way. He is still acknowledging the sovereignty of the Lord in the matter at hand.**

He’s saying, “Lord God, Sovereign Lord, You are in control. This seems impossible. Sovereign Lord, You say my reward will be great. It’s been 10 years. What gives?” He is speaking in a way that is not diminishing the Lord or showing doubt in a wicked way, but he is saying, “Lord, you have said this, and to me, it seems impossible.”

The LORD makes a promise:

After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abram
I am your shield;
your reward will be very great.

Abram questions it:

But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”

So, Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can You give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”

Abram continued, “Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir.” Now the word of the LORD came to him: “This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look at the sky and

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count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “Your offspring will be that numerous.” Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:3-6 CSB

Abram continued, “Look, You have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir.” Now the word of the Lord came to him, and God responds, “That one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir.” He took Abram outside and said, “Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then He said to Abram, “Your offspring will be that numerous.” And Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:3-6 CSB

Notice Abram doesn't do anything here. Abraham only believes. He says, “All right, God, You've said it's true. My wife's barren, I'm 85, okay, You're gonna make it happen.” That's it. He trusts the Lord at His Word, and the Lord credits it to him as righteousness. This is the first instance in the Bible of the word “believed.” This is the first time someone is credited as righteous. Abram trusts the Lord at His Word. He is talking to the Sovereign God, and this is the first time God is called the Sovereign Lord in the Bible as well. Abram in this passage is trusting the Lord at His Word and the Lord credits it to him as righteousness.

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true

The Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His word (1-6)

It is that simple. Abram doesn't have to do anything in this moment to be shown his righteousness is true. No, **the Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His Word (1-6)**

How much better would our lives be if we just trusted Him at His Word? One of the things I was reflecting on as I prepared this sermon was, sometimes there are big-name pastors in the world, like megachurch people, and they do these incredible things, and you hear about it, and you see it, and you see all the works. Then later on, you see the flaming because it was a works-based gospel, a works-based thing. The reality was, the faith wasn't in the Lord; the faith was in the movement, in the building, in this and that. But the Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His Word. It's not the works we have done; it's trusting Him at His Word.

I was convicted, you know, it's Father's Day. As I was reading this, I thought a lot about my dad. When I was growing up, my dad and mom were first-generation believers. When I was in high school and started to think, “Maybe I want to be a pastor,” I was a weird kid, by the way. I thought I'd be a pastor, a youth pastor, went to film school—there's a whole long story. For a long time in my life, I would get frustrated at my dad because I looked around at other dads in the church and other men in the church, and I thought, “My dad doesn't know as much of the Bible as them. He's not trying hard enough. He's not doing enough. I wish he was better, and if he was a better righteous father, then I would be a better righteous son.” I blamed sin on him. I did all these things that now I look back on and regret.

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I bring this up because if my dad were here, he'd say in his humility, "You know, I did mess up a lot, Matt." But one thing that I know to be true, and when I look back on it, it's one of my biggest regrets but also one of my biggest rejoices: my dad trusts the Lord at His Word. My dad's an elder now. He's grown so much in his faith, and he probably wasn't nearly as far off as I thought he was at the time. But I was so sure of myself as a 14-year-old. I look to him and his faith in the Lord that has been a steady influence in my life for 39 years, and I rejoice in that. I want to say this because sometimes when we look at fathers and husbands, we think, "Well, they're not doing enough, and they're not righteous enough," instead of looking and thinking, "Do they trust the Lord at His Word?" If you're here today and your husband or father trusts the Lord at His Word, they are deserving of honor for that, and you are blessed. That is worth recognizing because Abram, in this passage—I don't want to spoil next week, but Abram impregnates a slave. But in this moment, because of his belief in the Lord, it's credited to him as righteousness. If we would believe in the Lord and trust Him at His Word, and for those who do, it is a blessing for their households. I want to encourage you: if you're blessed to have a husband or father who does that, give them honor today and give glory to the Lord because the alternative of someone who doesn't trust in the Lord and His Word is a far worse father or husband to have.

The Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His Word. It's not about what Abram does in this passage. He expresses doubt, and yet, when the Lord tells him, he trusts the Lord at His Word, and that's when it's credited as righteousness.

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true

The Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His word (1-6)

The Sovereign Lord's sovereignty extends eternally (7-16)

The next thing we're going to see is that **the Sovereign Lord's sovereignty extends eternally**. You're going to say, "Pastor Matt, you can't put the same word in the definition twice." But the Sovereign Lord—the word "sovereign" there is part of a title, "Sovereign Lord," "Lord God." It's a name for God. When it's said, it's stressing the exact sovereignty that He has. What we're going to see in these next verses is the eternal nature of His sovereignty. It has no beginning, it has no end, there is nothing outside of His control.

He also said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

But he said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will possess it?"

Genesis 15:7-8 CSB

God says to Abram after this, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." Abraham said again, "Lord God, Sovereign Lord, how can I know

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that I will possess it?” First, he says, “How will You give me anything about my descendants?” and now he says, “How will I know I get this land?” Again, he’s expressing, “You’re sovereign, You’re in control, how do I know it’s true?” It’s this interesting back-and-forth because, again:

The LORD makes a promise:

He also said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”

Abram questions it:

But he said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will possess it?”

Genesis 15:7-8 CSB

The Lord makes a promise or reminds Abram of the promise He’s already made, and again, Abram questions it. He’s been in the land 10 years, he still has no children, the land is still not his.

One more note before we go forward: when the Lord says to Abram, “**I am the Lord who brought you from** Ur of the Chaldeans,” this language, “I am the Lord who brought you from,” is a foundational sentence in Hebrew. To the Israelites, it goes **from** this **to** “I am the Lord who brought you out of Egypt,” “I am the Lord who brought you out of Pharaoh’s hand,” “I am the Lord who brought you out of Egypt to the Promised Land.” Its foundation is found in this passage, where we first see the sovereignty of God labeled as “Sovereign Lord.” “**I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land.**” **Abram says, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will possess it?”** Genesis 15:7-8 CSB

He said to him, “Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” So he brought all these to him, cut them in half, and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in half. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

Genesis 15:9-11 CSB

The Lord said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” So he brought all of these to Him and cut them in half and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in half. Now, birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. Genesis 15:9-11 CSB

I know what you’re all thinking: “Ah, an ancient Middle East covenant is being drawn up.” Right? Some of you know I’m joking here because every time I read this passage, I’m like, “Abram just knew to cut the animals in half? That’s kind of weird.” But he does know because, in that day, they’re talking about possession of land. Do you know how you made a covenant for selling or buying land? This is the ancient version of DocuSign.

What’s happening in this passage is they would cut animals, split them, and put the sides opposite each other. Then, the way the covenant would be made is that you would walk

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through the cut, you would make the covenant to one another, and you would be showing the seriousness of your word: if you did not keep your word, may what happened to these animals happen to you.

So, Abram cuts the animals in half, lays the pieces opposite each other, doesn't cut the birds in half—they're too small, there's a whole aside about that. But I want to point out: birds of prey came down on the carcasses. Some people think, depending on study Bibles and different commentaries, that this is symbolic of the world, the sin, and the evil coming to try and stop it. Others say it's symbolic of the nations that would rise against Israel and fight them.

But what is much more likely, I think the simplest answer is the easiest here: it was nighttime when God said, "See the stars, your descendants are going to be that numerous." As we keep reading, we're going to find out the sun is setting when God speaks to Abram next. Abram probably does this early in the morning, then he waits on the Lord for the day, and there are these dead animal carcasses, so vultures are like, "Hey, let's eat those dead animals." Abram drives them off and waits on the Lord.

As the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him.

Genesis 15:12 CSB

In verse 12, ***"As the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him."*** The word "deep sleep" here should remind us because it's a very similar word used when Adam is asleep, and God takes his rib out.

But Abram is in a deep sleep, and he has a vision where suddenly great terror and darkness descend on him.

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens for four hundred years in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed. However, I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will go out with many possessions. But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

Genesis 15:13-16 CSB

It's in the terror and the darkness that ***the Lord said to Abraham, "Know this for certain: your offspring will be resident aliens for 400 years in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed."*** He's speaking of Egypt. ***"However, I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will go out with many possessions."*** This is Exodus 12 through 15, when the Israelites leave, and though they did not raise a finger in battle, they leave with the spoils of Egypt. ***"But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In***

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the fourth generation, they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

God speaks here of Israel’s future, Egypt’s future, and even the Amorites, one of the people groups in the Promised Land that would be wiped out when the Lord brings His people in. When you read this, what you see on display: God doesn’t just know, “Abram, I’m going to make your descendants a great nation.” He knows every single detail.

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true

The Sovereign Lord credits righteousness to those who trust His word (1-6)

The Sovereign Lord’s sovereignty extends eternally (7-16)

The Sovereign Lord’s sovereignty extends eternally. He’s saying to Abram here, “Someday, in Exodus 1, it’s going to say there came a Pharaoh who did not remember Joseph.” God did. God remembered every detail of every problem. God remembers everything that will come, and God remembers His promises, and He will carry them out. “Abram, you wonder when this land will be yours or your descendants’? It’s going to be 500-plus years, but it’s coming, and I will bring it about,” because the Lord’s promises He brings to pass. **The Sovereign Lord’s sovereignty extends eternally.** He knew 500 years in advance exactly what would happen. He knew when Moses said, “Let my people go,” Pharaoh would say “No” 10 times. He knew exactly what it would cost. He knew what would happen at the Red Sea. He was never surprised by a single detail because His sovereignty extends eternally.

I don’t know about you, but that gives me a lot of hope. There are times when I am surprised by something, and I can be so surprised I forget that God is never surprised. What a thing to rest in: if we trust Him at His Word, it means everything that arises in our life is not outside of His control. His promises will never spiral. His promises will never become untrue. What He has promised is assured if we would just believe it. Even when we don’t believe it, His promises are still sure.

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign LORD says is true

The Sovereign LORD credits righteousness to those who trust His word (1-6)

The Sovereign LORD’s sovereignty extends eternally (7-16)

The Sovereign LORD commits to Himself and us that He will fulfill His promises (17-21)

This brings us to the last point:

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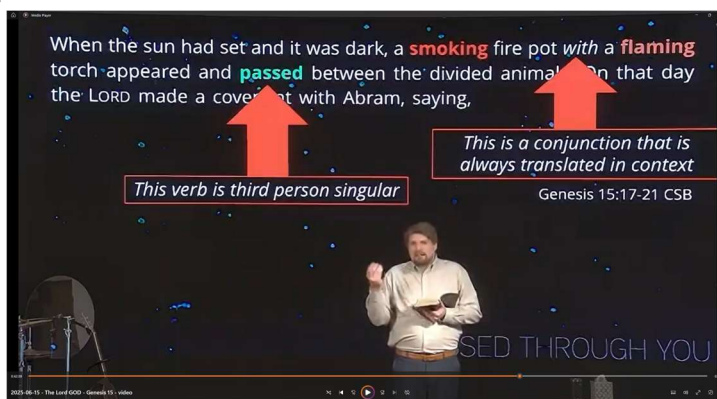
The Sovereign Lord commits to Himself and us that He will fulfill His promises. Not only does He make them, but He commits that He will see them through.

When the sun had set and it was dark, a **smoking** fire pot and a **flaming** torch appeared and passed between the divided animals. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

Genesis 15:17-21 CSB

“When the sun had set and it was dark,” we come back to the scene of the animal carcasses. Abram has seen this vision, and now, on the other side of hearing the Lord make His promises, **“Abram sees a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appear, and they pass between the divided animals. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram.”**

Before we read the covenant, we need to talk about the smoking fire pot and flaming torch. I also need to say, I came in this week sure about something that, after studying the passage, I have to correct for myself, and I think I’ve heard other people reference it as well, and it shocked me.



When it talks about the “smoking fire pot,” it should say “smoking fire pot with a flaming torch.” When it says, “they pass between the divided animals,” this verb is a third-person singular. Some of you are like, “Why does this matter?” Well, I’ve grown up hearing that God passed through twice, once for Himself and once for Abram.

When the sun had set and it was dark, a **smoking** fire pot and a **flaming** torch appeared and **passed** between the divided animals. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

Genesis 15:17-21 CSB

That’s not true. Singular, “passed”. The smoking fire pot and flaming torch are together. You may say, “Does this matter?” It’s going to matter by Genesis 22, I promise.

But what matters for right now is, when we read “smoking fire pot and flaming torch,” you may be like, “What on earth is this supposed to represent? Why does God choose to show up in this form?” Well, later on, we’re going to see a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by

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night. At Mount Sinai, on top of the mountain, when God in His glory goes up there, there's clouds, smoke, flame, and lightning, and the language is the same. In this passage, what we see is the Lord is the only one who passes through. He only passes once, but in His passing through between the animals, what is He doing? He is making a covenant. He is saying, "Abram, I have promised your descendants this land, and in human terms, I'm the one signing the contract." He's the one putting His initials and clicking over and over until He's done. He's the one making sure the contract is signed, and He is the only one responsible to see it through. Had Abram also walked through, Abram would be equally responsible, but God is the only one who passes between the divided animals. What God promises Abraham, God brings about—not because of anything Abraham does, not because of a commitment made between them of equal partnership. God says He will do these things, and He sees them through.

When the sun had set and it was dark, a **smoking** fire pot with a **flaming** torch appeared and **passed** between the divided animals. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your offspring, from the Brook of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River: the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

Genesis 15:17-21 CSB

The covenant is: "***I give this land to your offspring, from the brook of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River.***" There's some interesting notes tying this back to Eden, where the Euphrates was one boundary, and the lower brook, people argue, is the lower portion of Eden. Whether or not that's intended, what we see here is, when we go forward in Scripture, this is the exact land that the Israelites will eventually take over. This is the land that God has promised, and He promised it from the beginning to Abram, and the promise He made to Abraham was one that He said He will carry out.

Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign LORD says is true

The Sovereign LORD credits righteousness to those who trust His word (1-6)

The Sovereign LORD's sovereignty extends eternally (7-16)

The Sovereign LORD commits to Himself and us that He will fulfill His promises (17-21)

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You may say this contract thing is weird, and I think it's weird as well. Why I think it's weird is because God could have said to Abram, "Just trust Me," but He puts His name on paper, He makes Himself accountable. Of course, He will carry it out, but it's amazing that He does this on human terms, that humans would understand, that when He makes a

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promise, He will keep it. He makes it on human terms so that when they see it come to pass, they recognize, “This is what He promised. This is the contract that He made.”

When the sun had set and it was dark, a **smoking** fire pot with a **flaming** torch appeared and **passed** between the divided animals. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “I give this land to your offspring, from the Brook of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River: the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and **Jebusites**.”

Genesis 15:17-21 CSB

By the way, if we go back a verse, it ends with the Jebusites. The land of the Jebusites—God finishes carrying out this promise when David, as king, takes that land. It takes that many generations.

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But God makes this covenant, and He brings it about for Abram’s descendants. It is such a wonderful thing because He is the Sovereign Lord, and He commits to Himself and us that He will fulfill His promises. It is such a wonderful thing to realize that what the Sovereign Lord wants from us, the righteousness that He credits us with, is for those who trust His Word. We trust His Word because His sovereignty extends eternally. When we look at how He has dealt with man through Scripture, how He has dealt with humanity, is that He is committed to Himself and us that He will fulfill His promises.

To a serpent in the garden, He said, “Someday, one will come from the woman’s line who will crush your head.” To David, He said, “Someday, one will come from your line who will be from My line.” When Jesus died on the cross in our place, His blood was shed. God in human form took our place. It revealed His glory, and it also shows us that every promise, every covenant He made, He was the one who would carry out. Because we know His sovereignty extends eternally—past, present, and future—that means, before He said, “Let there be light,” He knew the cost, and He willingly paid it. **The Sovereign Lord commits to Himself and us that He will fulfill His promises. Righteous faith trusts that what the Sovereign Lord says is true.**

As we’re reading this, I want to tell you, this passage, I pray, encourages you in your faith—not in your strength, but in His.

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This week, I got a text from somebody on Thursday night, and I got permission from this man to share. He's a man I've known about 10 years, and he texted me and said, "Hey, if you could be praying, my family's in Israel right now, and missiles just kind of—they were overhead." He said, "We think we're in a safe area," but he was scared. What he said as he talked was, "Do you know any Scripture that I could turn to right now?" I'm studying Genesis 15 this week.

And then he says this: "I have been walking far from the Lord for a while, and I feel ashamed, and I'm worried if something happens, I won't have time to return." My heart broke. I first said, "I'm praying for you and your family." Then I was trying to think, "What should I say?" I've been in Genesis 15 all week, so I typed to him, "Do you know that story where Abram cuts all the animals in half?" There were three dots on the iPhone thing, then they disappeared, then they came back, and finally he went, "I don't know that one."

I said, "So there's this story, it's in the Old Testament. It's when we think about our faith. It's a foundational passage because God commits Himself to carry out a promise, and He commits Himself by being the only one to pass through. You read about that promise, and you see that promise come to bear. God doesn't just commit one of His promises; when God makes promises to humanity, He keeps every single one of them."

In Romans 10, when the Lord, speaking through the Holy Spirit through Paul, says, "For all who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, they will be saved." God says, "If you call in the name of the Lord, you will be saved." He takes those promises seriously, and if you are a child of God, as I know this man is, as far away as you may fall, the good news is it's not your strength you're relying on. What a wonderful thing to tell this man. As I was texting him, I was like, "I know this is a bizarre passage, but read it and realize that God's promises do not depend on us." For all who come to believe, for all who have that revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, no matter if their life is wonderful or a constant struggle, whatever happens in this life, the ultimate promises of God are unwavering because He has made them, and He has brought them about.

I don't know where you are today, but if you're here and you're a believer who's walking well, I want to say, keep walking that way. Keep trusting in those promises. Something I've found in my life is when I'm in a spiritually good place, I start to trust in my own strength. If you're walking well before the Lord, if right now your faith is a credit to your righteousness through the blood of Christ, don't waver. Keep trusting in Him. You have the Spirit to help you walk faithfully.

If you're a believer who's struggling to trust God at His Word, let me start with the good news: His Word is true. I would encourage you to spend time praying, "Sovereign Lord, You say this, and I'm struggling to believe it." Do what Abram does in this passage because God

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doesn't say to Abram, "Never mind, dude, back off." God says to him, "Alright, I'll show you. I'll make it more and more clear for you. Dust of the earth isn't enough of a metaphor? Look at the stars in the heavens. I'll make it clear to you, I'll write a contract with you, and I will sign it, and I will be the only one to sign it, so you know that this is a promise that only comes through Me." If you are struggling in your faith, rest in His promises. Cry out to Him, cry out, "Sovereign Lord," because He hears our prayers, and He is faithful to His Word.

If you're here today and you're not a believer, I've got good news for you: none of us are deserving of life in Christ. None of us are deserving of the forgiveness we have because Jesus died on the cross for our sins. When Adam and Eve in the garden didn't trust and ate the fruit, when Cain didn't trust and killed his brother, when Noah and the others besides Noah didn't trust, when the people at the Tower of Babel didn't trust—when you go passage by passage through Scripture, the big storyline of Scripture is about the sovereignty of God, and He will bring His promises to pass.

If you are here today and you're not sure where you stand before Him, be sure of this: God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son. He died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and for all who believe and call upon His name, you will be saved. That is a promise of God that He carries out. The Father sent the Son, the Son died for our sins, and He rose and ascended to heaven where He reigns, and the Father and Son sent the Spirit to open our eyes to the truth of the gospel. No matter where you stand before Him, the question is: has He opened your eyes to that truth? If He has, it is a wonderful gift, and His promise is sure, and I would encourage you to trust in it today.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank You that when we study Your Word, we see time and again how You carry out Your promises, how You, to sinful man, regard us and give us a way to You, reveal Yourself to us, and show us Your truth. We thank You, Lord, for that. We thank You, Lord, that no matter how far from You we may feel, no matter how we may struggle to believe, You are in control, Your promises are assured because You are Sovereign Lord. We thank You, Lord, that in Your sovereignty, You sent Your Son to die for our sins, and we thank You He rose and He reigns. Lord, we thank You that in Your sovereignty, You sent Your Spirit to open our eyes to the truth of the gospel. We pray, Lord, that as we leave today, we would rest in Your promises. We would trust that You reign, and Lord, we thank You that You have done all of this for Your glory and to reveal it. We thank You that You have revealed it to us. We thank You, Lord, for the work of Your Son. We thank You that we can trust in His promises. It is in His holy and precious name we pray. Amen.

You know, today we heard a great, great passage of Scripture in events proclaimed, declared, and explained to us. It's a great picture: the God Himself passed through those covenantal animals. We didn't pass through. Abram didn't pass through. He passed through. He was saying that if the covenant wasn't to be fulfilled, "May this happen to Me." The animals were divided and He walked through them, and He put Abraham to sleep. He didn't let him walk through because He knew we could never fulfill or take the curse of the covenant if it weren't to be fulfilled.

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That's exactly what Jesus did. He took the covenantal curse because God Himself walked through those animals, and He took that curse. When the Lord God died on the cross for our sins, this is such a beautiful thought: He walked through, and then He performed it. When we failed, our sin was covered by His righteousness. It says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, **“God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

Let's give Him thanks. *Father, we thank You and praise You that You took the curse, the curse of sin, on Yourself. We thank You, Lord, for walking through on our behalf. Lord, we thank You that by faith You give us the gift of righteousness. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Let's go in faith.