



Reading: Genesis chapter 15

Key Thought: Having faith despite circumstances and emotions. See Romans 4 verses 18-25

Context:

In chapter 14 we see how Abraham's nephew Lot was captured during a local civil war, and how the Lord had enabled Abraham and his men to rescue Lot and some others. Subsequently, Abraham again met with God through the person of Melchizedek. Abraham accepted the Lord's blessing, but he refused to accept anything from the hand of the King of Sodom. It was "after this" (verse 1) that Abraham again met with God and received a renewal of the Promise.

Content:

Although credited for his faith (Romans 4v22), Abraham was not afraid to voice his concerns.

He asks God two questions.

Question 1: "What can you give me since I am still childless?" (v2). Abraham was experiencing a conflict between his faith and his emotions. We can only imagine Abraham's frustration when he hears God's promises, yet he can see no way of them being fulfilled (remember, he was probably in his 80s by then). **God's answer was simple:** "You will have a son whose descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the night sky" (v4&5).

Question 2: "How can I know for sure?" (v8). Abraham believed and trusted God, but (like most of us) he needed reassurance – God was telling him one thing, but his circumstances and his emotions were telling him another. He wanted to understand the promise that depended on him having descendants – the promise of them inheriting the Land.

God's answer was instructive: God graciously gave Abraham an insight into the future (v12-16); about a time when the Israelites would be persecuted in Egypt; a time when they would ultimately leave Egypt and claim the promise of their inheritance in Canaan.

God's answer was sealed with a covenant: This was a pre-Mosaic covenant made between God and Abraham, the smoke and fire symbolizing the Presence of God. When two people in ancient near-eastern cultures made a covenant, they walked between the carcasses of animals signifying that if one of them broke the covenant they would pay the penalty of death. The wonderful thing here is that it was God alone who ratified the covenant, showing that the promise depended on God and God alone.

Challenges:

Believing when there seems to be no hope: When everything God has promised seems impossible, can we find the resolve to believe God's Word above what our circumstances and feelings are telling us?

Remember, God can and will find a way where there seems to be no way. His ways are perfect (Ps. 18v30)

How should we pray when we feel discouraged? Abraham simply asked God, "What can You do?" and "How can I know?" It's not wrong to ask God questions – that's what prayer is about. However, we should be prepared to listen for the answer, and be ready to act on it. (Isaiah 30v21)

Have we looked for the bigger picture? In verses 13-16 God showed Abraham the bigger picture. He might not always reveal it to us, but He certainly has one! What happens to us impacts on what happens to our family and friends. God has everything in hand, even when we cannot see it.

Romans 4v18: Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and became the father of many nations.

Communicate:

Feel free to let us know if you have questions or comments about this study. Perhaps you have a word of encouragement or a need for prayer if you are struggling with any of the issues. We will gladly get back to you.