



Sermon – 09/25/2022
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week

Genesis 15:1 – 21

Romans 4:18 - 25

Let's open our Bibles together. We're going to be in Genesis 15 this morning. Genesis 15 right here in the heart of the story of Abraham. And as you turn there, if you're a guest, whether you're in the room or catching us by video, welcome home. And I'm sure there were many of you last night as you were waiting to see what happened with that field goal that you were making promises and prayers to God. You know, the media's been calling it the oink doink. Have you heard that one yet? And I just want you to know, God heard those prayers and promises and He's excited for you to follow through on 'em starting today. As we turn to Genesis 15, it's the heart of the story of Abraham. I mean, think about what's happening. Genesis 12 is the calling of Abram. Genesis 14 is the clash of Abram. Now, we get to the covenant of Abram. And if you were to chop this one chapter out of the Bible, the rest of Scripture wouldn't make sense. It's a hinge moment. It's a linchpin. If you were to cut the Scriptures, it bleeds Genesis 15. This covenant is bound up in everything. It's essential for the story line of Scripture. But what we're going to learn this morning, is that this passage isn't just crucial for the story of the Bible. It's crucial for the story of our own lives. Because it's going to help us understand the reality about ourselves and about God more clearly that should change the way that we live today. So, let's see how this unfolds here as we work our way through Genesis 15 starting in verse 1 when it says,

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Let's pray together as we start our time in God's word this morning.

Father, Your word is truth. It's living and it's active. And I pray this morning that as we set our hearts on Your word that you will set our hearts ablaze for Your kingdom, for Your Gospel, for Your Son Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

When was the last time you were in the waiting room at the doctor's office? Over the last few months, living here in College Station, I had the chance to do it twice. A few months back, I wasn't feeling the best and so, I went over to an urgent care right as it opened. And before it opened, the lines were queued up at the door with people in need of help. And I don't know about you, but when I walk into a waiting room, I'm trying to figure out who's the sickest person in there that I want to avoid sitting by. And so we all had to wait in line to go through and fill out the forms and they take down the information they've already gotten from you a hundred times and then make you do it again. And as others are doing that in front of me in line, I'm kind of listening in to try to diagnose how serious the problem is and how close I'm willing to sit to them. I got treatment there and then a few months later, not just a couple of weeks ago, I was back in the doctor's office this time for a different reason. Not for sickness but for an injury. I was working out and me and a barbell had a clash and the barbell won. It split my shin wide open. I had to have seven stitches and I was in a sports medicine doctor's office here. And it was a totally different atmosphere than in the urgent care because there you could tell people were coming to get medical help but you couldn't see what was wrong with them. But you walk into a sports medicine orthopedic place and you don't have to wonder what people's issues are. They've got an elbow bandaged up, a knee wrap, they're on crutches, you can see it. And that's the way it works sometimes with physical pain. Some can be seen, some is unseen. But everyone in those waiting rooms was the walking wounded. They're carrying pain. They're feeling brokenness. There's a sickness. And the reason people come to the waiting room of a doctor's office is they are coming on basis of a promise that they can find healing. They can find restoration. They can find deliverance from their problems. Whatever brought them there that one day they may work through it and be on the other side of it in deliverance. That's why the waiting room exists. The waiting room is there in anticipation of the fulfillment of a promise. When we get to Genesis 15 this morning, we find Abram the waiting room of life. He's waiting on the fulfillment of a promise. God has already given him a calling in Genesis 12 of a new people and a new place living at a new purpose. But he hasn't seen that fulfilled. He's living in that moment where his experience doesn't match his expectations and he is longing for that promise to be made true. And if we're being honest this morning, each one of us find ourselves in exactly the same place. In the waiting room of life. Where so often our experiences don't match our expectations. Our present doesn't match our promises, and we're wondering when and how God will make things right. That He will bring healing. That He will bring restoration. That He will bring deliverance for us. And as God works in the life of Abram in this text, He meets him in the waiting room in a way that changes everything for him and for us as well. Because what we're going to find this morning is that as Genesis 15 unpacks God's covenant with Abram what it's going to do is give us a window into how God's designed the world to work that changes everything about the way we live by reshaping how we see ourselves and how we see God. And that the heart of this covenant is our saving faith and God's sovereign faithfulness.

So, let's spend some time this morning unpacking each of those. We'll start back in verse 1 and look first at our saving faith. We find in Abram the perfect model of what saving faith looks

like. Because what we notice when we look back starting in verse 1 is that everyone of us is faced with the choice when we sit in the waiting room of life. When we see that gap between our expectations and our experience. It leaves us with unsatisfied desires, unmet needs. And in that moment, we're forced with the choice. Will we respond to those unmet expectations with fear or with faith? That's why verse 1 speaks to Abram, and God says, "Fear not." The call in the waiting room of life is not towards fear but faith. And what we see playing out in Abram's life is a saving faith that has several characteristics. And I want you to see these four marks of saving faith that we find in the life of Abram here Genesis 15. The first one that we notice is dependence. Starting back in verse 1, we see that saving faith depends on the protection of God. So, notice what verse 1 says,

¹After these things, the word of Lord came to Abram in a vision saying, "Fear not, Abram. I'm your shield; your reward shall be very great.

So, this is the first time that God's appeared to someone in a vision before. And when He does that, he comes with the message of a promise of protection. He says, "Fear not." Why? "Because I am your shield." Even this mighty man who had gone out in the last chapters, a conquering warrior to rescue his people and his possessions, he himself could be gripped by fear. He could need a shield. How much more so for us? And so what God is calling Abram and us to is a dependence on Him. That our hope, our reliance is not in ourselves, in our strength but in God alone. And in this first mark of saving faith, that of dependence, it's when we look to God as Savior. We look to Him and say, "I need you. I can't do this on my own." That's the message that God is speaking to Abram there in this moment and that echoes true to us today. Saving faith begins with dependence. But the second thing you'll see starting in verse 2 is saving faith is also marked by desire. Saving faith desires the provision of God. So, in verses 2 and 3, God, Abraham responds to God's word in the vision not with an exclamation point but a question mark. He doesn't respond to God by saying, "Wow", he responds to God by saying, "How? How you going to do this, God? How are You going to show up?" And embedded in that question is not an element of doubt but desire. He wants to understand, to know, to see how God will bring this promise to fulfillment. And that's so important when we understand how the Bible elsewhere speaks about this moment. So, turn with me to Romans chapter 4 and hold your spot there because there are going to be several times we look at that passage. In Romans 4, we're going to start in verse 20 right now. What we're going to find is that Paul helps us to understand what's happening here in Genesis 15. And as he does this, it's going to show us the nature of this desire embedded in Abram's saving faith. Here's what Romans 4:20 tells us.

²⁰No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

So, when we see these questions come up in verses 2 and 3, it's not the evidence of unbelieving doubt in the provision of God but unwavering desire for the provision of God. He longs for it. He wants to see it. He wants to know how it will take place. In verse 4, God gives him an answer to his question. Look at how He responds to Abram's desire. It says in Genesis 15:4,

⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; but your very own son shall be your heir."

In other word, God meets Abram's desire with the promise of provision. This one that you're trying to say might work as the heir is unnecessary. Eliezar, the son of Damascus. We don't need him. There will be an heir. I will provide for you. Your desires will be fulfilled. See, the difference between dependence and desire in saving faith is the difference between when we look at God and say, "I need you as Savior" and when we look at God and say, "I want you as Lord. I'm willing to follow You, to give my life to You, to pour myself out for You, to put my trust in You." That's the type of desire we see on display. See, the danger when we talk about our need of Jesus, our need of the Gospel, is that we can look at Jesus and say, "Yes, I need Him." But unless and until we look at Jesus and say, "I actually want Him. I want to follow Him." Then, genuine saving faith hasn't happened. I mean, we know what that looks like to know you need something but to not actually want it. For you kids, that's the same thing when your parents tell you that you need to clean your room. You need to do it but you don't want to do it. You need to eat your vegetables but you don't want to. You need to floss but you don't want to. You have to have both dependence and desire as foundations for saving faith. That we look at Jesus, what He's done for us in his death and resurrection, and not just say "I need it because of my sin" but "I want it for my salvation." That's what desire looks like.

But let's keep going in the text because in verse 5, we see this transformative image appeared that points us to the third mark of saving faith which is delight. Saving faith delights in the promise of God. So, notice what God does next. In verse 5, it says,

⁵And he brought Abram outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

So, God's building here on the promise He's already made in the calling of Abram in Genesis 12, that he would be a great nation. He says to look up at the stars, and you will see how greatly I will fulfill this promise. What Abram has experienced by faith, he can now anticipate by sight as he looks at the heavenly places. And look back at Romans 4 with me because Paul sheds more light here starting in verse 18. He helps us understand the significance of this moment as Abram looks at the stars in a way that changes how he will see the heavens for the rest of his life. In Romans 4:18, it says this,

¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

Now, think about what Paul's saying here. It it says that when God calls Abram to look up at the stars of the heavens. It now takes eyes off the wounds of his past, the pain of his present, his fears of the future. He shifts his focus so that now he finds his delight in the promise of God. That he no longer sees God in any other way other than a treasure to seek. A promise to pursue That's the picture that's here. Saving faith delights in the promise of God. It runs after it like a treasure. It's like Jesus says in the parables, the man who finds a treasure in the field, he goes and sells all he owns, comes back and buys the field so they can have it. That's the type of delight. That's the type of dedication that marks saving faith. And this picture of the stars that Abram would have had in that night sky is something that new technology gives us a fresh

perspective of. Have you heard or seen some of the images of the new James Webb Space Telescope? The most advanced telescope to ever be used in outer space. I just want you to look at the screen and see some of the pictures that are, that have been taken from this telescope. You'll notice on this first one, it's called the Orion Nebula. You know the Orion's belt that you see the constellation there that shows the stars. That's a place where some of the stars are formed. And if we're able to bring that picture up, what you will find is the brightness on display in that area. And so that the telescope is taking pictures of that nebula. It's taking pictures of things called the cosmic cliffs that will show the amazing star factories that are there in the heavenly places. But the most incredible one of all is what they call a deep space image. And I don't know if we'll get it on the screen or not. If God can fling the stars into heaven out of nothing, maybe He can put it there on the screen. I don't know if we have it. But if we don't, you need to look it up at some point because what you will find in that picture is all across the expansive space. You'll see dot after dot after dot of light in the midst of darkness. And when you see that, the first thing you think of is that each one of those is an individual star, an individual planet, an individual celestial body. When in fact, each one of them marks out an entire galaxy. And in this image, if you just spent time counting, it would take you so long to count the number of galaxies you see that you couldn't even fathom it. And what you need to understand is each one of those galaxies is filled with millions and millions of stars. We see things now more clearly than Abram could have in this pasture in the Middle East. The abundance of the stars show the significance of the promise. And the clearer our sight, the greater our delight. The more clearly we see God's promises, the greater our delight should be in those promises. God brings Abram face to face with the heavenlies to show him what He will provide. And when He does that, it causes the response of saving faith, that of deep delight.

But there's one more aspect of saving faith that you need to notice here in the first part of this passage. It's not just dependence and desire and delight. The fourth one is decision. Saving faith decides to follow the plan of God. That's precisely what we see recounted back in verse 6. It's not enough just to see your need of Jesus as Savior or to want Jesus as Lord or to delight in Jesus as your treasure. All those things could be true but unless you make the personal decision to embrace that as your own. To make your faith your own. To put your trust in Jesus as your Savior, Lord, and treasure, that's the only point in which you can find saving faith. That decision changes everything. And so look at the decision that we see recounted here back in verse 6. It says,

⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

This term believe, this this idea of making firm, to stand firm on something, to commit. And in the original language, it has the picture of ongoing action. It's not just something that happens in a moment in your past but it is ongoing trust over an extended period of time. And look what happens as a result of that faith. The end of verse 6 tells us, it was counted to Abram as righteousness. Now, when we know the story of Abraham, this is a stunning reality. We know he on his own was not a righteous man. He fled from God in the famine. He sold out his wife when they went to Egypt. Over and over again, he turned his back on God. But when he believes in God as his Savior, his Lord, his treasure. When he depends on Him, when he delights in Him, when he desires Him, when he decides to follow Him, it changes everything. His sin is replaced by salvation. His past is replaced by God's promise. His fears are replaced by a faith so that his guilt is replaced by righteousness. That now when God looks at Abram, he no longer

sees him defined by his sinful past but by his faithful future. And that future is something that he couldn't do on his own. It's not on the basis of his behavior but his belief. Not on the basis of his fruit but his faith. And in that reality, it is a picture for us of what saving faith looks like for you and me. That's why Paul speaks to this back in Romans 4. I want you to see one last part of that passage down in verse 22 when he tells us that Abram is a pattern for the nature of our saving faith today. Look at what Romans 4:22 says.

²²That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” ²³But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

So he's showing us how Abram is a model for our saving faith. That just as Abram believed and God counted it as righteousness. When we looked at Jesus and see that He died for our trespasses and sins. He made a way for us in salvation. He rose from the dead defeating satan, sin, and death. When we decide to trust in that, it changes everything for us. God takes our sin. He gives us His righteousness. We are made new. We are transformed through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

But there's another reality that's modeled here in the passage. Not just the saving faith that we're called to but the sovereign faithfulness of God is on display here. So let's pick back up beginning in verse 7 as we look next to God's sovereign faithfulness. Here's how the text says it.

⁷And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ⁸But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

So here's what happens. We see the shift in the text from a focus on Abraham's saving faith, to now God's sovereign faithfulness. And that sovereign faithfulness is on display through the forming of a covenant. Now, what's a covenant? Just want a simple definition, a covenant is a foundational promise by God rooted in His character and His commitment. A covenant is a foundational promise of God rooted in His character and His commitment. Not long ago, I was able to visit New York City and go to the 9/11 Museum. If you've never been, it's a powerful and heartbreaking experience. But one of the unique features of this museum is it's actually primarily underground. They take you into the space that would have been where the foundation of the buildings were laid. And there along the walls, you can see some of the anchor points, some of the foundation pieces that were instrumental in the architectural structure of the building to allow the entire building to stand. The building can't stand without the foundation. That architectural structure is essential. And in the very real sense, that's what the covenants are for the unfolding of the Bible. They're the architectural structure that gives the shape and stability to the story line of Scripture. And as we look at this covenant with Abram, we're going to see several ways that the sovereign faithfulness of God is on display in the forming of this covenant

with Abram. And the first one that you'll see is right there in verse 7, that God establishes a covenant rooted in a new place. Now, you notice up on the screen if we have it that a few weeks ago, we made a Vin diagram when we set up God's calling Abraham. One that marked out a place, a people, and a purpose. And that same reality that we saw several weeks ago in Genesis 12, we also see playing out in the forming of the covenant today. In the first dimension that we see is that of place. That God establishes a covenant rooted in a new place. That's why verse 7 tells us,

⁷And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

So, He gives him this promise of a new land. This promise of a new place. And how does Abram respond? Well, verse 8 shows us. He responds with a question. He says,

⁸But, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"

This is not a question of doubt but discernment. Abram is wanting to understand how it is that God is going to bring these realities to be. You see, one of the things that we need recognize as a side note here is that Abram is showing us it's okay in our spiritual lives to ask questions of God. And sometimes these questions maybe of doubt and they may not be honored to Him as we question the why. But the questions that honor God are not out of doubt but discernment. Where we want to know not just why God is doing something but how. And how long, oh Lord. What would this look like? That's what Abraham is crying out to. And what God does is He meets his question with the covenant. That's what verse 9 tells us. It promises that he will have a place to belong. And in order to prove it, verse 9 through 11 gives these instructions that it, that the establishment of the covenant will come through the shedding of blood through the sacrifice of animals. So, He tells them to grab these different animals and for most of them, he cuts them in two. He spills their blood. He separates them and he sets them along a walkway. Why is this taking place? Because God is showing that He will keep this promise of a new place. He will maintain the covenant. And when this blood is shed, it reminds us that the shedding of blood is essential for the establishment of the covenant. And it's not just a picture for what God is doing with Abraham, it's pointing forward to the son of Abraham that's to come in Jesus Christ. That in Jesus, God brings us a new covenant. Not built on the spilled blood of lambs and goats, but on the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Where what's divided not the carcasses of dead animals but the curtain of the temple that's torn in two. That's the kind of covenant He gives us. This promise of a new place, a new creation, a new kingdom that He's calling us into.

But there's a second dimension of this covenant that displays God's saving faithfulness. When God establishes a covenant, He also promises the creation of a new people. Both a new place and a new people. So, let's see Him talk about that new people by picking up in verse 12.

¹²As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶And they

shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Now, as you hear these words read, can't you just pick up on the echoes of the Garden of Eden embedded in this covenantal promise? Remember you look back in verse 12, what does it say happens to Abram? A deep sleep falls upon him. Where else have we seen a deep sleep? In Genesis 2, God puts a deep sleep on Adam as He brings forth that rib to fashion a new people, a new woman, a new bride. And in the same way that God brings a deep sleep to bring about a new people in Genesis 2, he does that in Genesis 15. A deep sleep that is the foundation for a promise of a new people here. But that's not all. Because when you look at verse 13, one of the ways that it describes this new people is it refers to them as your offspring, your seed. That should ring a bell to us as we go back to the Garden of Eden again. Because after Adam and Eve fall into sin, Genesis 3:15, the first promise of salvation is one in which God tells us, He will raise up an offspring from the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. That same word, offspring and seed, that shows up there in Genesis 3:15, God is using here as a foundation for the new people that He is promising to Abraham and to us. But this covenant promise of a new people doesn't just look back on God's sovereign faithfulness in the past. It looks forward to God's sovereign faithfulness in the future. I mean, look at the way it describes it in verses 13 through 16. It tells us, yes, there will be a new people but it will not be a happily ever after. They'll be sojourners. They'll be servants. They'll face trials. But verse 14 is the key. Look back to what it says,

¹⁴But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

God's faithfulness to His people is not just a thing in the past. It's a promise for the future. That even though they will face trials of many kinds. Their hardship should still be filled with hope because the promise that God makes here is to protect a new people for Himself. Which brings us to the last dimension of this covenant that shows God's sovereign faithfulness.

You'll notice down in verse 17 and following that God establishes the covenant created around a new purpose. It's centered around a new purpose. So, let's notice that purpose beginning in verse 17. It says,

¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

So, here's this final dimension of the promise. This picture not just of a new place and a new people but a new purpose. And where do we see that new purpose on display? It's in the nature of this bizarre description that takes place here of what happens. I mean, this is one of the most unusual parts of the Bible. Just put yourself where Abram is. You see God in a vision. He tells you to look up at the stars. He tells you to take these animals, to cut them in two, to set them in a path with their bodies split apart. And next thing you know, you are in a deep sleep and after

that, you look up and in the middle of those dead animal carcasses, you see a smoking pot and a torch of fire floating right through it. What in the world is going on here? This doesn't make any sense. What is taking place? Well, in order to understand this, you need to know what was common in the ancient near East in the making of a covenant. The common practice in that day is that when two people were making a covenant, they would sacrifice animals and split them apart and the participants in the promise would walk through the middle making the declaration that if either of them failed to keep the covenant, what happened to the animals should happen to them. It's a promise of judgment. I mean, the closest modern parallel you might be able to come up with is imagine the next wedding you're at. Maybe it's during hunting season and the groom has a few whitetail that he just bagged. And he takes those and cuts them in half and he lines the walkway down the aisle to the altar. And the minister stands in front of the congregation and says, "They walk between these animals because if they fail to keep their vows, they want you to know this is what should happen to them." That would be the type of moment taking place here. But there is something even stranger than that in the text. Because if you notice Abram watches the walk, he doesn't walk the walk. There's only one thing that's moving through it. This pot of smoke, this pillar of fire. And we know elsewhere in Scripture, God often appears in this way. You think about when He leads Israel out of the Exodus and into the wilderness. How does He go before them? As a pillar of smoke, as a pillar of cloud, as a pillar of fire. It's a symbol of the presence of God. So, here's what's happening. God is making His promise as His presence walks through this commitment to His covenant. He's the only one that makes the commitment. He is the one pursuing us. He is the one promising to make a difference for us and when that happens, the one who makes the promise gets to determine the purpose of the promise. And that's what's at work right here in Abram's life and in the entire sweep of the story of Scripture all the way up to you and to me. That the maker of the promise determines the purpose of the promise. And you and I, if we're in Jesus, are sons and daughters of Abraham. We've been grafted into the family of God. Why is this important? Because now, we are called no longer to live our, for ourselves but for the God whose blood was shed for us. Who died in our place, who kept the covenant so that He could receive the promises, the purpose of our life as a new purpose. Not grounded in our own desires but in God's desires.

There's a man named Jeff Agar who was sitting in a doctor's waiting room much like I was just a few months ago. But this time, he was in the waiting room decades ago. He was there with his wife who was expecting a child. And they were there not for a joyful situation but dreading terrible news. You see, the doctors had noticed some abnormalities in the development of the baby and they were coming in to get a diagnosis for what ailed their growing child inside her womb. And what the doctors told them was just about a worst-case scenario. This child, who they would later name Johnny, had cerebral palsy. The doctors told them then he would probably never walk or talk. Not long later, Johnny was born and he actually defied the odds. He was able to gain speech. He was able to gain movement. Eventually, able to fully walk and with help to fully talk. And both of those things needing outside assistance. He defied the odds. And one of the things as Johnny grew that he would consistently talk to his dad, Jeff, about is his desire to compete in an Ironman Triathlon. You know what an Ironman is? It's a 2.4 mile open water swim, followed by a bike ride for over 100 miles. And then finish it off with a full marathon. Now, a man with cerebral palsy that can barely walk. He has no hope of doing that on his own. The only way Johnny could ever think about competing in an Ironman is if someone else took his place. And in this case, if a loving father, this father Jeff, stepped in and took his place and competed on his behalf. And for several years, Jeff and Johnny had been training for

the Ironman. They've tried and failed five times to complete it. But just earlier this month, they were at an Ironman in Maryland, one of 1,400 competitors. And they set up on the race, which has a time cap of 17 hours, and Jeff swam through the open waters pulling Johnny on a kayak. He biked over 100 miles pulling Johnny on his bike. And he pushed him 26 miles to the finish line in a cart. And with only 5 minutes to spare, they approached the finish line. I came across a video of that finish that I want you all to see right now. It's something special that took place across that finish line. If we had that video, let's show it.

Could you see the joy on his face? As his faith became sight as he crossed that finish line. You could hear them as they crossed the finish line say, "Johnny, you are an Ironman." Now, did he complete the race? Did he do it himself? No. Someone stood in his place. A loving father came alongside him and did what he couldn't do on his own and made a way for him to run the race that he could never run himself. And the only way that that was counted to be true of him is because he trusted that father, and that father brought it to completion. And what he once saw by faith, he now walked by sight. And isn't that the picture of faith we see on display here in the life of Abram? This saving faith, this faith that sees the finish line, that trusts a loving father, that receives an undeserved gift that pleads the merits of our righteousness on the basis of undeserved grace. We bring nothing to our salvation but the sin that makes it necessary. And yet through saving faith, God can change everything. A loving father poured out the blood of His only Son to in your place. And the question that Genesis 15 is bringing us face to face with this morning is this one. Do you have saving faith? Have you looked at Jesus as your Savior, Lord, and treasure? That's what we need to wrestle with as we turn our hearts to pray this morning.

Lord, we know that You make all things new. That you set us free from sin. That it's only by Your Spirit that we can experience the faith that saves. And I pray for the men and women in this room, or catching us by video today, that if any of them have never trusted in Jesus as their Savior, Lord, that this will be the day of salvation. That You will set them free from their sin. And for those of us who are following Jesus, may we remember Your covenant faithfulness. The way that You've called us to a greater purpose, not to live for ourselves but for Jesus who died and rose again in our place so that we can honor Him with our lives. We do it all for His name's sake in whose name we pray. Amen.