

Sermon Title: Big Doubts, Bigger Promises

Abram's doubts in chapter 15

- Quote: After busy engagement comes dullness; after triumph, flatness and sadness. I have pursued kings, got myself a great name, led captivity captive. Men are speaking of me in Sodom, and finding that in me they have a useful and important ally. But what is all this to my purpose? Am I any nearer my inheritance? I have got all that men might think I needed; they may be unable to understand why now, of all times, I should seem heartless; but, O Lord, [You know] how empty these things seem to me, and what will [You] give me? Abram could not understand why he was kept so long waiting. The child given when he was a hundred years old might equally have been given twenty-five years before, when he first came to the land of Canaan. All Abram's servants had their children, there was no lack of young men born in his encampment. He could not leave his tent without hearing the shouts of other men's children, and having them cling to his garments—but "to me Thou hast given no seed; and lo! one born in mine house, a slave, is mine heir."

Two Major Sections. Two Major Lessons

1. God is gracious and patient with us in our doubts (vv. 1-6)

Read vv. 1-6

Background:

- God's word to Abram was that he would be a blessing to the nations (12:1-3)
- God's goal: Restore Eden

Abram's record

- Faith in leaving his country
- Faith in rejecting the rewards of the world (14:22-23; 15:1)
- Not without sin and doubt (12:10-20; 15:2, 8)
- Encouraging judgment: Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness (15:6)

Application:

- If you have doubts, you are in good company.
- If you have doubts you have even better company in the One who never doubted.
- Quote: "Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. ... We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means." - C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity
- Your doubts and sins need not remain (1 Corinthians 10:6-13). They can be dealt with by God's best word: the gospel.
- The gospel speaks to the most common and core doubts of humanity

2. God keeps his promise at great cost to Himself

Read vv. 7-11

- Questions are not always the same as doubts
- Read Luke 1:18 & 1:34
- **Application Note:** The Christian faith is not a faith where you have to check your brain at the door. Questions are welcome.
- God affirms his word to Abram by setting up a "covenant ceremony"

Read vv. 12-16

God is Not Promising that:

- His promises will be fulfilled without suffering

- His promises will be fulfilled on your terms or in your time

Despite this: We see that his purposes in all the waiting are good and gracious

Application Note:

- Often our doubts have nothing to do with God and everything to do with our lame, entitled expectations.
- The sooner we put our expectations and our assumptions to death the better we see what God might be doing in our seasons of waiting and doubting and hurting.

Read vv. 17-21

- God's promise is kept at great cost to himself

Concluding Applications:

- In our doubts we need to be told what we already know...and we need to be willing to truly hear these truths from others.