

Genesis 15:1-6

Pentecost 12; August 7 & 8, 2016

There is a phrase that has been around for many years. It describes a person as a *"Jack of all trades and master of none"*. The Chinese have a similar phrase that is translated like this: *"Equipped with knives all around, yet none of them is sharp."* We may be able to do many things in our lives. Yet, none of us can do everything perfectly. However, God is the master of everything and everything He does is excellent. That simple truth is clear in the pages of the Bible. Therefore we can always, and I mean ALWAYS, trust Him.

We exist to display God's glory. Human life is all about God. God exists to pour out blessings on his people. Yet, so often we act as if we actually are gods. We want to be god. Most of us would never say that; but we do. We want God to work out things in our lives OUR way. If that doesn't happen, we get mad, we get frustrated at God.

To illustrate that, ask yourself the question: *Does your perspective of God change when circumstances in your lives change?* It's easy to follow God when things go well, our wealth is growing, our health is excellent and our friends like us. Yet, how do we feel about God when our body breaks down, our job folds up and we don't have the money to pay the bills we owe? What do we do? We try to play God.

Abram and Sarai began to think that way. Abram is now 85 years old. Sarai is now 75 years old. God had given them a promise ten years earlier: **"I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted."** (Genesis 13:14-17) There was only one problem with this promise. In order for this process to begin, you need one son. This plan "A" of God doesn't seem to be working out very well. From their perspective, God just is not carrying out His plan.

So, what do they do? They think that they have to come up with plan "B". *"Maybe God needs our help."* **"Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."** So, what does God do? He repeats His promise for the 5th time. **"Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"** Scientists today say that the number of the stars in the sky, whether or not we would be able to count them, may be as many as 10 times with 24 zeros behind it. I think, that is a Septillion. There may be as many as 170 billion galaxies. From Abram's and Sarai's perspective, they are getting a little old to have children. In fact God wouldn't begin to fulfill his promise to them for another 15 years yet. God was really testing them to trust his promises.

This week, I needed to go up to the DMV center on Grange Avenue. It is always interesting to watch the young people there who are about to go out on their driving test. But it is even more interesting to watch the emotions on their parent's face as they leave. Sometimes, I think, they are more nervous than the kids. (At least, I was.) What if God can't carry out his promise to Abram? But God was training Abram and Sarai to trust him. He has it all under control. **"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.'"**

God promises him: **"I am your shield."** The word that is used for "shield" is a word that is used to describe the protective, hard hide of a crocodile. A hide that is so hard that it can protect the crocodile from small caliber bullets, spears and arrows. That is the kind of shield that God was going to protect Abram with. He had no reason to be fearful. By this time in Abram's life, he was rich. He had it made from a human perspective. But God was going to give him and this world a greater treasure on the face of the earth.

You may or may not believe this. But your belief, or the lack thereof, changes nothing. You can believe the earth is flat or that politicians will soon stop lying, but your belief won't alter reality. Reality is that God is good. His goodness knows no bounds. He will be bound by no man from being good to that man, whether the man desires, expects, or curses the gift of God when it lands in his lap.

That was what God was doing. He was putting into Abram's lap a promise that changes everything in this world. Abram would not live long enough to see God carry out this plan to its full extent. By his death, all he has for descendants are a son and 2 grandsons. -- three people. Yet, God tells us: **"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."**

Earlier this summer when we were in Alaska, my wife and I decided to try some rock climbing. After we did some of that, we were given the opportunity to repel down a 70' cliff. As I stood on the top, with my heels hanging over the cliff, leaning backward, everything in my brain is telling me that I should not be doing this. Why would you fall slowing backward on the top of a cliff? Yet, it really wasn't all that hard. Why? Because I knew that I was being held safe by a rope that was securely fastened into the rocks above, and another rope being held by our guide on the top. There really was nothing to fear.

There was nothing for Abram to fear. So, **"Abram believed the Lord."** Abram believed God's promises, even though from a human stand point, this made no sense. Yet, that is the beauty of God's grace. Our faith doesn't rest on our feelings, but is rests on the solid promises of God. Why can we trust him? He is God, we are not. He will NEVER let us down. Believe it. Trust it. Amen.