God's Covenant with Abram

A Five-Day Devotional from Genesis 15:7–21

Day 1: A Promise Is Only as Reliable as the One Making It

Read: Genesis 15:7; Exodus 20:2

Before Abram asks how he can know, God gives His name and His record. "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

The sentence reaches in two directions. It looks back to what God has already done. He called Abram and brought him out of Ur. It also looks ahead to His purpose. God intends to give Abram the land he now walks through as a stranger.

Israel would have heard the familiar pattern. At Sinai, God introduced Himself as the LORD who brought Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 20:2). The God who brought Israel out of slavery is the same God who started this story by bringing Abram out of Ur. God's past faithfulness gives weight to His future promises.

When someone says, "I'll take care of it," your confidence depends on who is saying it. Some people say it and you relax. Others say it and you start working on a backup plan. Same promise, different person. A backup plan can be wise. The point is that your confidence depends on the person who made the promise.

When you live between what God has said and what you can see, start with who He is and what He has already done. God has acted decisively for us in Christ. Jesus died for our sins and rose again. When the outcome of a medical test or a job search is still up in the air, you can ask God for what you hope to see. Your confidence before Him rests on His saving work in Jesus. The God who accomplished it will keep every promise He has made to His people.

Reflection Questions

1. What does God tell Abram He has already done, and what does He intend to do?

2. How do the death and resurrection of Jesus give you a firm reason to trust God's saving promises?

3. Where are you allowing uncertainty about the future to overshadow what you know about God's character?

Today's Practice

Write down two things God has already accomplished for you through Jesus Christ. Read them aloud before you pray about something you are still waiting on.

Prayer

Father, thank You for showing Your faithfulness in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Forgive me for doubting Your character when I can't see what lies ahead. Help me remember what You have done and trust You with what I'm still waiting for. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 2: Faith Brings Its Questions to God

Read: Genesis 15:6, 8–11

Abram asks, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" Picture where he is standing when he asks. He can walk through the land God promised him, look at it, and build an altar on it. He is still a stranger there. There's a difference between standing on a piece of ground and knowing it will be your family's inheritance.

Verse 6 has just told us that Abram believed the LORD, and God counted that faith to him as righteousness. In verse 8, that same man asks the Lord how he can know. Faith does not mean having a complete itinerary. Abram brings his question to the God whose word he believes.

You can tell God honestly where you're confused or afraid. Demanding a private sign puts conditions on your trust, as if God owes you a particular answer before you can take Him at His word. Abram asks, and God chooses how to answer.

God tells Abram to prepare for a covenant. Abram brings the animals, divides the larger ones, and lays the halves opposite each other. When birds of prey come down on the carcasses, he drives them away. His obedience matters, and it has limits. He can prepare and guard the ceremony. The promise still depends on God.

We sometimes treat obedience as a way to control providence. We assume that if we pray enough, obey consistently, and make all the right decisions, we can secure the outcome we want. But obedience is not a bargaining chip. Abram's obedience mattered, but it could not guarantee the promise. Because Christ has accomplished the salvation we could never secure, we are free to obey God without pretending that our obedience controls the future.

That freedom gives us a reason to keep obeying when results are slow. You can tell the truth even when it costs you. You can ask forgiveness even when you can't predict the other person's response. God receives us in Christ, and His grace teaches us to take the next step of obedience while we leave the outcome in His hands.

Reflection Questions

1. What does Abram do in these verses, and what remains beyond his power?
2. What is the difference between bringing God an honest question and making your trust depend on a sign?
3. How does Christ's finished work help you obey when you can't predict the result?

Today's Practice

Identify one act of obedience God has clearly placed before you today. Do it faithfully, and then pray, entrusting the outcome to Him.

Prayer

Father, thank You that I can bring my questions to You. Forgive me when I neglect what You've told me to do or try to use my obedience to get my way. Thank You for what Christ has already accomplished. Give me grace to obey and leave the outcome with You. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 3: Certain Does Not Mean Easy

Read: Genesis 15:12–16; Romans 8:28–30

As the sun goes down, a deep sleep and a dreadful darkness fall on Abram. The man who spent the day preparing the animals now has to listen as God tells him what lies ahead.

Abram had asked, "How am I to know?" God answers, "Know for certain." Then He tells Abram that his descendants will live as strangers, serve another people, and suffer oppression for four hundred years. God will judge the nation they serve, and they will come out with great possessions, as Israel later did in the exodus. Abram himself will die in peace at a good old age. His descendants will return to Canaan in the fourth generation.

God rules over this history, and the oppressors remain responsible for what they do. Their cruelty is evil, and God says He will judge it. He also gives Abram a reason for the timing of the return. The iniquity of the Amorites is "not yet complete." God is patient with the people living in the land, and when judgment comes, He judges justly. The return has an appointed time.

Faithful parents want to see their children walking with Christ. Those who serve the church want to see lasting fruit. Those who have prayed for years want to see an answer. But God has not promised that every act of faithfulness will produce visible results within our lifetime. Abram's lifetime ended. God's promise did not.

Romans 8 tells us what good God has pledged to bring about for those who love Him. Read verse 28 with the next two verses. The good God is working toward is our conformity to Christ. The same God who calls and justifies His people will bring them all the way to glory. We can ask Him for healing, reconciliation, or the return of a wandering child and trust Him with the answer.

We may not know why a particular hardship has come or how long it will last. But we know what God has promised His people in Christ. He will conform us to the image of His Son and bring us to glory. The road may be difficult, but the destination is not uncertain.

Reflection Questions

1. What does God tell Abram to expect before his descendants return to Canaan?

2. What does God's response to the oppressors and the Amorites show about His justice and timing?

3. How does the good promised in Romans 8 shape the way you pray for an outcome you can't see yet?

Today's Practice

Make two short lists, one of what you are praying for and one of what God has promised in Christ. Pray over the first list, then read the second one aloud and thank Him.

Prayer

Father, thank You that no hard road is outside Your rule. Give me patience when I can't see what You're doing. Keep me faithful in prayer and steady my hope in the good You've promised me in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 4: Only God Passes Between the Pieces

Read: Genesis 15:17–21; Jeremiah 34:18–20; Joshua 21:43–45

When the sun has gone down and it is dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between the divided pieces. Scripture often shows God making His presence known through fire and smoke. Think of the burning bush or of Sinai, where smoke covered the mountain when the LORD descended in fire. Here God makes His presence known in the middle of the ceremony Abram has prepared.

The Hebrew expression in verse 18 is that the LORD "cut" a covenant. The language fits the scene. The animals have been divided and laid opposite each other.

Passing between the divided animals was a solemn covenant oath. Jeremiah 34:18–20 helps us understand the significance of the act: covenant breakers were subject to judgment. Yet in Genesis 15, God alone passes between the pieces. He binds Himself by oath to fulfill what He has promised.

Abram had brought the animals, arranged the pieces, and driven away the birds. That was real obedience. By the time the fire pot and torch pass between the pieces, Abram has fallen into a deep sleep. The Lord takes the oath Himself. The certainty of Abram's future rests on the faithfulness of the God who promised it.

Then God names what He is giving. "To your offspring I give this land." He names boundaries and peoples. Generations later, Joshua 21 records that the LORD gave Israel the land He had sworn to give their fathers. They took possession and lived there. The God who spoke that night kept His word in history. That gift prepares us to see the fuller inheritance God gives His people in Christ.

We often measure assurance by how strong our faith feels or by how our week went. Faith bears fruit in obedience, and we can thank God when we see that fruit. The ground of our assurance is firmer than our ability to see growth in ourselves on any given day. God has given His word, and Christians have every reason to take Him at it because of Jesus Christ.

Reflection Questions

1. Who prepares the ceremony, and who passes between the pieces?

2. How does Joshua's account of Israel receiving the land help you understand the oath God makes in Genesis 15?

3. Where do you turn for assurance when your faith feels weak?

Today's Practice

Read Hebrews 6:17–19. Identify one thing in which you have been grounding your assurance other than Christ. Confess it to God and thank Him for the certainty of His promises.

Prayer

Father, thank You that the certainty of Your promises rests on Your faithfulness rather than my performance. Forgive me for trusting my feelings and accomplishments more than Your Word. Teach me to rest in Your promises fulfilled in Christ and to obey You out of gratitude for Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 5: The Promise Finds Its Yes in Christ

Read: Galatians 3:13–14, 16, 29; Hebrews 6:13–20; 2 Corinthians 1:20

Paul says in Galatians 3:16 that the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring, and he identifies that offspring as Christ. If you belong to Christ, Paul says in verse 29, you are Abraham's offspring and an heir according to promise. You share in the inheritance because you belong to the One to whom it was promised. All the promises of God find their Yes in Him.

God fulfilled His promise by bringing Israel into Canaan, and the story carries us further. Abraham looked forward to a better country and a city whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10, 16). In Christ, the promised inheritance reaches its ultimate fulfillment in the renewed creation. What awaits His people is resurrection life with Christ in God's renewed world.

Hebrews 6 takes us to the oath God later swore to Abraham in Genesis 22. God swore by Himself because He had no one greater to swear by. His word was already trustworthy. He confirmed it by an oath to show the heirs of the promise that His purpose could never change and to give them strong encouragement to hold fast to their hope.

How can sinners like us receive that blessing? Galatians 3:13–14 says Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. He did not bear a penalty for failure in God. He bore the curse our lawbreaking deserved. Through His death the blessing of Abraham comes to the nations, and those who trust Christ receive the promised Spirit.

Christ rose and went before us into God's presence. Hebrews calls our hope a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul. Our hope is anchored where Jesus is. The One who went ahead of us is there on our behalf, and the inheritance He secured is sure.

Jesus asked, “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26). His suffering was the very means of our redemption. When your own road is hard and the waiting is long, look to the risen Savior who has gone before you. If you don't yet belong to Christ, come to Him. Turn from your sin and trust the Savior who bore the curse for sinners and rose again.

Reflection Questions

1. How does belonging to Christ make you an heir of the promise to Abraham?

2. How does knowing that Christ bore the curse your sin deserved free you from trying to establish your own righteousness before God?

3. How might the hope of resurrection life with Christ shape the way you face a long wait?

Today's Practice

Pray Hebrews 6:18–19 back to God in your own words. Then encourage one person with the hope you have in Christ.

Prayer

Father, thank You for giving us a sure hope in Jesus. Thank You that He bore our curse and has gone ahead of us into Your presence. Keep my eyes on Him when the road is hard, and help me encourage someone else with the hope You've given me. In Jesus' name, Amen