



The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Genesis 15:1-6

"Abram Believed the Gospel"

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TRANSCRIPT

All right, I want you to take your Bible, turn with me to the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 15; and we've come to an extraordinary passage. And if you're visiting today at Trinity, we're thrilled you're here; please come back. And you just need to know we're going through, preaching through the book of Genesis, and we're preaching verse by verse through the book of Genesis. And we're just very committed to the Bible and to the Word of God, and so we take God's Word very seriously, and we want to give care to everything that God says; so we don't want to skip over any verses or any truths. We want the full council of God. We want it all.

And so, today we are in Genesis chapter 15, and I am triply excited, because I only have to look at six verses today, all right? And there are no difficult names to pronounce. So, I'm going to begin by reading our passage, Genesis 15, beginning in verse 1. And the title of this message is "Abram Believes the Gospel. Abram Believes the Gospel."

So, beginning in verse 1, "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.' Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.' Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but the one who will come forth from your

own body, he shall be your heir.' And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you're able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" Now here's the knockout punch. "Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." This is the reading of God's, inerrant, and infallible Word. Let us go to the Author in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, as we come now to look into Your Word, we are mindful that this is Your Word. This is the accurate account that has been recorded for us, that every jot, every tittle, every stroke, every letter has come from You. It is infallibly true, and it has power in it. And, Lord, I pray that the power that is contained in Your Word would be unleashed by Your Holy Spirit in our minds and in our hearts and in our lives today. Please do not let this truth go in one ear and out the other. May it stick with us in our minds, in our hearts. May it activate our wills. So, Father, we look to You to do what only You can do, as we study Your Word. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior. Amen. [End]

In these verses we see being addressed what is the greatest need of every human on the earth, and that need is, "How can sinful man be made right with Holy God?" Every other need that you have in your life is secondary, addressing issues like, "How can I provide a better life for my children?" It's important, it's not priority. "How can I be put onto the right career path?" That's important, but it's not priority. What is priority in your life and in every human being on planet earth is very simply this: "How can I, who is unrighteous, be made righteous before a righteous God?" that that's the issue.

And there are many answers that people give to this question: "How can I find a place, the place of acceptance with God? How can I, when I die, go to heaven and not to hell?" Many answers. Some people say, "Be a good person." Others say, "Be religious." Others say, "Be sincere." Others would say, "Do good works. Join a church. Be actively involved in helping others. Give money to the church. Give service to a charitable organization."

All these things are wonderful and good, and should be pursued in their place, but they are not that by which you would gain a right standing before God. None of these will bring to you what you so desperately need, which is a perfect righteousness, a perfect righteousness to be given to you. We are too sinful, and God is too holy for us to be admitted into His presence with His approval without a perfect righteousness. And what we have addressed in this passage – and, oh, what a Sunday you've come to church today – what we have addressed in this passage is the answer. It is a monumental text. And verse 6 specifically is the Mount Everest of the entire Old Testament.

Verse 6 is the most important verse in the entire book of Genesis. I don't care what anyone else would say, this is the most important verse in the entire book of Genesis. But beyond that, it can be argued that it is the most important verse in the entire Bible; no less than the imminent expositor theologian James Montgomery Boice says, "This is probably the most important verse in the entire Bible. This is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament."

You need to know this is the first time in the entire Bible that the word "believed" is used. This is the first time in the entire Bible that the word "righteousness" is used. This is the first time in the entire Bible we actually have the account of a personal conversion by faith to God. This the first time in the Bible that we have taught the most important doctrine concerning the application of salvation: the doctrine of justification by faith.

The doctrine of justification by faith is the major argument in the book of Romans and the book of Galatians. It was taught by Jesus. It was taught by David. It's taught right here in verse 6. John Calvin called justification by faith the very hinge of the gospel, meaning everything hinges and pivots with your understanding of justification by faith. When Paul makes his case in his epistles, it is the heart and the soul of his presentation of genuine salvation.

So, verse 6 is not peripheral, it's primary. It's not secondary, it is that which is most significant. Martin Luther the great Reformer said, "Justification, this is the chief article from which all other doctrines have flowed." In other words, if you're right about justification by faith, if you're right about verse 6, you will be right in a hundred other places. It's a corner stone doctrine; and if you're wrong here, you're going to be wrong in ten thousand places. It's that important.

Luther went on to say that "this doctrine of justification alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God. And without it, the church of God cannot exist for one hour." Luther said, "This doctrine is the master. It is the prince, it is the lord, it is the ruler, it is the judge over all kinds of doctrine."

And so, I want to underscore for you the supreme importance of what we're looking at here. If you're going to be right anywhere in your understanding of the Bible, you have to be right here in order to be right with God. And if you're wrong here, you're outside the kingdom of God and you're on the broad path headed for destruction, no matter how kind and gentle you are. I thought you would get it.

So, what is the truth of justification? What is justification by faith? I mean, what is that? It is very simply this, that though we are all sinful, we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Surely you know that. If you don't know that, sir, just ask your wife. You have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done for you in His sinless life and in His substitutionary death because of faith in Christ alone, God takes the perfect righteousness that was secured and purchased by Jesus Christ, and He gives it to you, though you have nothing to work for it.

You have done nothing to earn it, it is given to you as a free gift, a free, prepaid gift on the basis of the merit of Jesus Christ. Because you have put your trust, your confidence, your faith in Christ, God transfers the vast assets of the unsearchable riches of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, it is

all transferred to you, and it has become your eternal possession, and it is the only basis by which you may enter into the courts of heaven and receive a welcome and remain there throughout all eternity. That is what is being taught here. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. This is the main thing. We're not chasing rabbits with this, we are in the center of the fareway with this.

So, let's walk through this passage. But just know, as we walk through this passage we are making the ascent upward to verse 6, and we're starting in the valley, and we're going to end up on the mountaintop with verse 6. So, come with me on this journey, as we walk through this passage.

As we look at verse 1, the first heading I want to set before you is "the revelation he heard, the revelation he heard," because God now breaks into the silence of Abraham's life, and God now speaks to Abram, and by divine revelation begins to communicate what he needs to know. So we read in verse 1, "After these things," after what has just happened in what we looked at last week. After Abram has been a mighty warrior, has fought the four kings to the north in Mesopotamia, after he has chased them out of the Promised Land, after he has defeated them, and really, after – we can open up the lens here – after God has called Abram out of Ur of Chaldees, after God has led him to Haran, after God has brought him down into the Promised Land, after Abram has gone down into Egypt, after Abram has come back now from Egypt, after he has fought all these wars, all of this has been to set the stage for this.

God's timing is always perfect. God is always out ahead of the parade. God is always prescribing history before it comes to pass, and this is now Abram's appointed time with God. And I want you to know God has an appointed time for you with God, an appointed time by which God will speak to you through pages of Scripture and bring you to the intersection of life where you have to make the decision, "Which way will I go?" That's right where Abram is standing now at the intersection of life, and it is time now for God to call for the order. It is time now for God to call for the verdict in the life of Abram.

And so, we read, "After these things" – after everything that I just walked us through – "the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision." Now the difference between a dream and a vision: in a dream, the person who receives divine revelation is asleep; in a vision, the person who receives the revelation is awake. And Abram is very much awake. All of his senses are sharp. He is alert, he is awake, and God comes to him in a vision.

So there will be something pictorial that will be in front of him, but it will not be a silent movie, if you will. There will be the audio. There will be the voice of God that will speak directly to Abram, and this voice said, "Do not fear, Abram." Please note, He calls him by name: "Abram." This is not whosoever will, this is pinpointing one man, one person at one point in time. And I think of John 10, verse 3, in which the Good Shepherd calls His sheep by name.

Whenever we are called to faith in Jesus Christ, it is a highly personal matter. No one is converted by being a part of a group, we come to Christ one at a time. It is a narrow gate that is so narrow there can't be a crowd that goes through that gate, you come one at a time. And so God is calling out Abram now, "This is your moment with Me, Abram. Do not fear." Do not fear, because there are many dangers around him; yes. Do not fear, because God is now speaking to him; yes.

"Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield to you." And what that means very simply is, "In the midst of all of your dangers, I am your protector, I am your defender, I am your deliverer, I am your Savior. There is no one else who will defend you and protect you and care for you, both now and throughout all eternity, Abram, than Me." And this is a truth that is taught throughout the Bible.

Just to give you one cross-reference: Psalm 18, verse 2, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation." This is how God is making Himself known to Abram. "Abram, without Me as your shield, you are defenseless, you are helpless, you are hopeless, you are vulnerable, you are

weak. You cannot care for yourself nor defend yourself if you do not have Me. But if you have Me, you have everything that you need."

And then He adds, "Your reward shall be great." It's interesting here that God does not say, "I am your rewarder." He says, "Your reward shall be great," and the implication is God will be his reward. God Himself will be his reward; and everything that Abram will need, God will provide.

You see, God is not just a giver, God is the gift. He is the giver, but what He gives is Himself. That is what grace is. And because God is a God of perfect righteousness, only God can give perfect righteousness to you and me. The prophet Isaiah says, "All of our righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight." We have no righteousness of our own, we are all spiritually bankrupt in the courts of heaven. If we are to be accepted, someone else must give us their righteousness in order for us to gain admission. And this righteousness that we so desperately need can only come from God Himself, because God is perfectly righteous, and only God can give up His own perfect righteousness.

And this is what happens in justification. It is what's known as the great exchange, 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He" - God the Father - "made Him" - God the Son - "who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Here's the great exchange. All of our sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ at the cross, and His perfect righteousness is laid upon us.

The worst about you and me was laid upon Christ, the best that Christ is and has is laid upon us; and that's the great exchange. And if you try to get to heaven in your own righteousness, you will never make it; you will be expelled from the presence of God because you do not have perfect righteousness. You and I must go to God and do business with God. You and I must come to God on His terms if we are to have the righteousness that we must have. And so, this is the revelation he heard. And I trust that you have heard this revelation. I trust that God has given you ears to hear

and eyes to see what is being said, because this is the only hope of salvation that there is.

Now we come, second, to verses 2 and 3. I want you to note "the reluctance he voiced, the reluctance he voiced." I mean, Abram responded with, "God, it's just not happening. I don't have really what You require of me." And so, we read in verse 2, "Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless?'"

Just a note of background, God has already said in chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, that Abram would be the father of a great nation, that there would come from his loins and through the womb of his wife Sarah, there would come a great nation, and that nation would be the nation of Israel, and it would be God's covenant people. It would be the nation through whom God would speak to the world. It would be the nation that would produce the prophets. It would be the nation who would receive the Law. It would be the nation to which it would be given the covenants. And so God has already promised Abram, "You'll be the father of a great nation. And in fact, it will not be contained with just the nation Israel; no, it will spread to the four corners of the earth, and all the families in the world will be blessed because of you."

Now Abram is childless. Sarah has not been able to produce a child, he has not been able to sire a child. Abram is impotent, Sarah is barren. There is no future, and so that's why he says, "and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus." You see that in verse 2. Eliezer was like the manager of his finances. Abram was fabulously wealthy, vast holdings of livestock and gold and silver and all the accompaniments of that, and so much so - I mean, he had 318 men who worked in his employment that he had trained for battle. We saw that last week. And so Eliezer here is like the financial steward or manager of his resources, and Abram is saying, "I don't have a child. When I die everything's just going to have to go to Eliezer. I don't have a child to receive my inheritance."



In verse 3, "And Abram said, 'Since You' - God - 'have given no offspring to me," - now just pause there for a moment. Abram well understands that only God can give life in the womb. He well understands that every conception in the womb is a sovereign intervention of God, who is life and who alone can give life. I mean, we can plant seeds, but only God can germinate a seed.

And so, he says, "You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house as my heir." So, here's the dilemma which Abram finds himself, that there is no divine solution to meet the divine promise. What God requires, God has not provided. And if God is to fulfill His promise, then God must provide what He requires.

And this is really at the heart of what the gospel is, what God requires of you and me to gain access into heaven and acceptance before the throne of grace. You and I can never fill that order. You and I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Yet that's God's requirement, and He will not lower the standard one millimeter. And so in the gospel, what God requires, God provides; and that will be what Abram will soon learn.

So, this leads us now to verses 4 and 5, and I want you to see "the reassurance he received." God now speaks a second time, and God brings reassurance to Abram, because God's working on a different time schedule, and everything is going along the way God wants it to go. From a human perspective, it's over. From a human perspective, "I'm not getting any younger." From a human perspective, "There's no way this is going to work out." But God now speaks a second time to bring this reassurance.

So, in verse 4, we read, "Then behold," - the word "behold" means "now pay attention to this" - "the word of the Lord came to him," - Abram - "saying, 'This man Eliezer' - of this man who is Eliezer - 'will not be your heir. You're not going to leave everything to your vice president. He will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir. No; Abram, you will be progenitor of a child, even in

your own age." And we see here with the third person singular pronoun "he," it's going to be a son. It's going to be a young man who will be born.

And so, in verse 5, "He" - God - "took him" - Abram - "outside and said." So obviously, Abram has been inside of a tent; that's how Bedouins lived at this time. They lived in tents, and they would move their livestock from one green pasture to another to a waterhole, and they could just pull up stakes and easily move around in an area. So it's to be rightly assumed Abram is inside of a tent. And God says, "Come outside and I want to show you something," and He will show him the stars; and so therefore, it is at night also.

And He says, "Now look toward the heavens," and there's something even in that. In other words, "Abram, you need to look up to Me. You need to get your eyes off of yourself. You need to stop looking at your impotent, dead state, and you need to lift up your eyes and you need to look to Me, Abram." That's really what faith is; it is a looking away from yourself and away from all of your inadequacies and away from all of your shortcomings and away from all of your inability to commend yourself to God. "Stop looking to yourself, look to God. Lift up your eyes." And that is what God is saying.

"Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars," - now that's quite an assignment - "count the stars, if you're able to count." There is an innumerable number of stars. It's an impossible assignment. It's beyond calculation. "And He said" - God said - "to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" What is impossible to Abram is more than possible to God. And that is what faith comes to understand, that what I cannot do, God can do and will do when I put my trust and faith in Him.

And when He says "your descendants," He's talking about more than just physical Israel, with which we will have to the end of the age, Romans 11. But it's talking about a spiritual seed, sons of Abraham who are sons of faith. "And there will be so many you will not be able to count them." And if we had time, we could go to the end of the Bible to the book of

Revelation, and in Revelation chapter 5, when John is caught up into heaven in a vision, John sees the heavenly courtroom and the area around the throne of God, and he sees myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands.

The highest number in the Greek language is ten thousand. That's myriad; it's in the plural. Myriads of myriads means ten thousands times ten thousands times ten thousands times ten thousands with thousands times thousands left over. That's a lot. It's a narrow path, and few that be that shall find it compared to those on the broad path. But nevertheless, those who are on the narrow path, it's an incalculable number. How overflowing is the saving grace of God down through the centuries to save untold numbers of people.

And so, this is what God is communicating to Abram, and He's giving Him the reassurance, that where God guides, God provides; that what God orders, He can pay the bill; and that what God requires of His servants, God will provide. Everything that God requires of you, He will provide you the grace to do it, and He will provide you the open door through which to go. He will provide you the path down which you will walk. He will provide you the supply of all that you need. He will not meet all your greeds, but He will meet all your needs, to carry out His sovereign purpose and will for your life.

And this is a reassurance that you and I need as well. There are no dead ends with God when God is leading us. If God needs to part the Rea Sea, then God will part the Red Sea; but God can always move us from Point A to Point B and take us where we need to go, we just need to get our eyes off of ourself and have our gaze upon God. Robert Murray M'Cheyne said years ago, "Only glance at yourself, gaze on Christ." We have a tendency to do it the other way around. We micro-exegete ourselves and only occasionally glance at God. So this is the reassurance that God brings to Abram.

This brings us now to verse 6, and here is the crescendo. Here is the grand mountain peak. Here is arguably perhaps the most important verse in the

entire Bible. If you get anything, get this. Verse 6 begins, "Then" – stop right there. This was the perfect time. This was the moment for Abram. Everything has been a front porch to lead up to this door. Everything has been in preparation for this one defining moment in Abram's life.

"Then he" – Abram – "believed in the Lord." Now some of us may say, "Well, I thought Abram was already a believer." We need to understand, there is a non-saving faith and there is a saving faith. You can read the end of John chapter 2, verses 23 to 25, and see that there is a faith that does not save, a faith that does not save, it's just all in the head. It's just intellectual ascent to some facts, it's checking boxes.

But true saving faith runs deeper than just the intellectual cognitive ascent; it gets down into the heart, down into the soul, and it triggers the will, and it moves a person to commit their life to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. And to this point in my understanding of Scripture, Abram has simply been following the leadership of God, but he has not yet come to that narrow gate, to that defining moment when he will exercise saving faith.

The whole book of Hebrews is really all about Jewish people who had come to church and heard the gospel and liked what they heard, and they were taking little baby steps to that point of commitment, but they had not yet come; and some were falling back because of persecution and because of opposition. And the book of Hebrews is, "No, you've got to come all the way to faith in Jesus Christ." It's not enough to take steps toward Christ, you've got to come all the way to Christ. You can't just have your toes up to the narrow gate, you've got to put both feet on the other side of the narrow gate.

And that one step of faith is a defining step of faith, where you go from darkness to light, you go from death to life; and that is where Abram is. He is standing in the middle of the narrow gate, and he now takes that last step to come all the way. And we read, "and he believed in the Lord." That's never been said of Abram before. I mean, before he is just simply in the process of being drawn closer and closer and close; but he's no longer at the

curb, he's no longer on the front sidewalk, he's no longer on the porch, he now is coming through the narrow gate to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now this word "believed" is a Hebrew word "amen." Literally "amen." It's translated this way into every language of the world, like "hallelujah." And what Abram is simply doing here is he is saying his amen to God. He is putting his confidence, his certainty in God to do what God says He will do. And I want to tell you four things about this faith that he is exercising right here.

Number One: "It's personal." No one else could have believed for Abram. Sarah couldn't believe for Abram. Lot couldn't believe for Abram. This is as personal as it can be. There are no group decisions for Christ. There are no committee votes to get into the kingdom of heaven. God has many children, but He has no grandchildren. You must come personally, individually to faith in Christ, and you must come one at a time.

The second thing I would tell you about this faith of Abram; not only is it personal, "it's decisive." It is a pivotal moment. It is the defining moment in his life. It takes place in a moment of time. It's just one step. It's not a series of steps, it's not a journey; that's being drawn. But at the moment of conversion, there is one defining step of faith to close the deal with God. And before that step is taken, you're on the outside. When you take that step, you're now on the inside. It is that black and white.

The third thing I would tell you about this exercise of faith by Abram, "it's wholehearted." I mean, true faith is a firm confidence in God by which you rise up and say, "Amen," to what God has said in His word; and in essence, you are saying, "I am all in with God." There is no half faith that is a true faith. All true saving faith puts both feet through the narrow gate and into the kingdom of heaven. And so he is committing himself to God, he is crossing the line with God.

And the last thing I would say to you, "it's necessary." There's no other way to be right with God than to come to this crisis moment of faith.

Now some of you here today can tell me the year, the month, the day, the time exactly when this took place in your life. Others of you here today cannot pinpoint it like that. You just need to know it nevertheless did take place at a defining moment in your life. Even the very imagery of being born again, that takes place on a day. That takes place at a decisive moment in time; and so does the exercise of true saving faith.

So, continue to look at verse 6, this goldmine of verse 6. There's just so many diamonds that are just laying here on the floor. It says, "He believed." I will just make a comment there: he believed. He didn't do anything else. He didn't believe and work, he didn't believe and become good enough, he didn't believe - I mean, he's still the same sinner who lied about his own wife when they went down to Egypt and told her, "Tell everybody you're my sister, not my wife," to save his own hide. If anyone was unworthy of this moment, it was Abram.

He just believed. "He believed in the Lord," it says. And we need to be reminded that faith is no greater than its object. It's really not faith that saves, it's the object of faith that saves. Your faith didn't save you, Jesus Christ saved you. You didn't save yourself by the exercise of your will, it was the Lord Jesus Christ who saved you. Yet your connection to Christ that all of the vast spiritual wealth would be transferred to your account, that was activated by faith, your faith. And that faith is necessary. But your faith is no better than the object of your faith.

You could exercise faith in a false god. You could exercise faith in an idol; that's not going to save you. You could exercise faith in your church or your pastor; that's not going to save you. You could exercise faith in your parents; that's not going to save you. There's only one object of faith that will save you, and that is God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, he believed in the Lord. He believed that the Lord is his only shield, verse 1. He believed that the Lord is the only rewarder; He Himself being that reward. He believed that God alone can bring forth life, even from his physical body, the same with his spiritual heart; that God alone is life, and that God alone gives life.

So, notice what the last part of verse 6 says. What's the result of saving faith? What is the result of putting your whole confidence in God and in His Son Jesus Christ? What's the result of that? Well, it says at the end, "He" - God - "reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Now what's interesting about this verse is the "it" is not defined. In grammar, an indefinite pronoun like "it," you would look for the antecedent, the last object that is mentioned before. But there is no antecedent for the "it." So, what is it that has been reckoned to us? And we actually need the rest of the Bible.

And interestingly enough, this verse is quoted four times in the New Testament: Romans 4:2, Romans 4:22, Galatians 3:6, and James 2, it's either 22 or 23. And when we read those contexts, it's very clear what the "it" is. It is the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ in His sinless life, in His substitutionary death, that has secured and purchased perfect righteousness by His active obedience under the Law, and by His passive obedience to suffer upon the cross in our place. It is that righteousness which Jesus secured for us; that is what is given to us. We are given a righteousness that we have never earned, that we have never secured, that we could never buy; it is given freely as a gift.

Now, the Bible uses four illustrations of justification, and I want to close by giving you these four illustrations, which will be, I hope, eye-opening for you to understand what justification actually is. The first is "a judicial illustration, a judicial illustration," that you stand before the judgment bar of God in heaven. He is the Judge of heaven and earth. And the books are opened, and every sin that you have ever committed in the entirety of your life have been kept with infallible records, and the case is presented to God,

and the wages of sin is death. And you have no advocate to plead your case; you are condemned.

But standing next to you is Jesus Christ; and because of your faith in Jesus Christ, God looks upon Christ and sees His perfect righteousness, that He never once sinned, that He never stumbled or fell, that He resisted every temptation, that He was obedient to the will of the Father in everything, that He went all the way to Calvary's cross; and there as an act, a final step of obedience to the Father, He laid down His life bearing our sins. God the Father looks at Christ and sees His record of perfect righteousness; and then God looks at you and me, filthy sinners that we are. God brings down the gavel and He declares us to be the perfect righteousness that Jesus Christ has purchased for us.

We still sin. We still stray. We still fall. But in the courts of heaven, there has been a forensic declaration that is irrevocable and irreversible, no matter what sin you would ever commit. You have been declared to be righteous before God. That's the judicial illustration.

The second is "a financial illustration," and it too is used in Scripture. You stand before this same judgment bar of God, and God is the Judge; and God opens the books. And what does He see next to your name? He sees that you have no spiritual capital whatsoever, that you have no assets to commend yourself to God. In fact, God sees that you are a debtor, and you have no basis by which you may pay off this debt, and you are spiritually bankrupt before a holy God; and if you were to live ten thousand years, you could never work your way out of debtors prison.

Standing next to you is the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, through His sinless life and substitutionary death, has secured vast estates of wealth, forgiveness of sin, pardon from sin, perfect righteousness. And because of your faith in Jesus Christ, though you don't own a thin dime, God declares that all of the riches of Christ would be transferred to your account. So it is as though God takes your deposit slip and His assets, and they're dropped into your account. You've gone from being a pauper to a prince, and you



now meet the requirement of heaven. There's no other way for your debt to be paid but for these riches to be transferred to your account. That's the financial illustration; and that's what happens in justification.

The third illustration is "a clothing illustration." We come before the judgment bar of God and we stand there naked, just like Adam in the garden. We're a spiritual leper. The wounds of our sin and the foul ooze that has come from our wounds, we are detestable in the sight of God. We are hideous and ugly in the eyes of Him who is too holy than to behold iniquity.

And standing next to us is Jesus Christ, who by His sinless life and substitutionary death has woven garments of perfect righteousness. And because of our faith in Christ, God the Judge takes the perfect robes of righteousness, spectacular in beauty, and drapes them over us; it covers all of our sin. And when God looks at us He can only see the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's the clothing metaphor. And I wish I had time to give you all the cross-references.

The fourth and final illustration is "the merchant illustration," and this is drawn from the word study of what the word "righteousness" means in the Hebrew: *tsedeq*. A woman comes into the marketplace to buy some food, some grain. She comes to the merchant, he pulls out his scales, and she says she wants a measure of whatever of grain. So she pulls out a metal weight, and he places it on one of the dishes on one side of the scale, and he will pour out grain into the other dish until the two scales are equal; and when they are equal, they are said to be righteous. It's met the standard perfectly.

So, we now stand before the judgment bar of God, and here are these two dishes, and every sin that we have ever committed, mountains and mountains, mountain ranges of sin, is placed in this one dish. And with all of our good works and all of our efforts, and with all of our morality and with all of our church-going, it doesn't move the scales one inch. So, how will these scales be brought into perfect alignment? And there's only one way, and that is for the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ to be put on the other side of the scales to counterbalance all of the sin and all of the

transgressions. And when those scales are brought to perfect alignment, they are said to be righteous. That's what happens in justification. And Jesus Christ is the only one who can fulfill the judicial requirement, the financial requirement, the clothing requirement, and the marketplace requirement, by the perfection of His sinless life and His substitutionary death upon the cross.

Abram had the gospel preached to him. We don't know exactly what was preached to him; but if you'll come to John 8, we'll wrap this up. In John chapter 8, I'm going to paraphrase a couple of these verses. I'm looking at verse 52. The paraphrase is Jesus is confronting the religious leaders of the nation of Israel, the Pharisees, and He has called them out. He has spoken very directly to them and has told them, "You don't have ears to hear what I'm saying. You're enslaved to sin." And they say to Him, "What? We have Abraham. We have Abraham as our forefather." And what they're saying is just because they have this legacy of being a Jew that they are right with God, because down the line in the family tree Abraham was their forefather. And Jesus says in verse 56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

We don't know the specifics of all that was communicated to Abram; and there would be other spiritual lessons that will follow after John 15. But I will tell you this, that anytime anywhere anyone has ever been saved, from Adam to the last person who'll ever be saved in this world, every conversion, every entrance into the kingdom of heaven, no exception, is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And there is the revelation of Christ in the Old Testament.

Everything that happened is not recorded in writing in these thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. But we do know that Abraham saw the Messiah. He saw Him because it had been revealed to him by God the Father. And there is something of Christ that has been revealed to Abraham at this defining moment in his life, that, "There is coming a Messiah, there is coming a Savior, there is coming the incarnation of the shield who will be my Savior, who will be my deliverer." And so he believed God, he believed in the gospel; and God reckoned it to him as righteousness. The

word "reckon" means to impute. It means to charge to an account. It means to give a judicial declaration. And Abraham in this defining moment is brought to faith in Jesus Christ.

So, I want to conclude by asking you this: "Have you come to this place where Abraham was brought? Have you personally and individually and decisively, wholeheartedly believed in the Lord? Have you committed your life to Jesus Christ? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the virgin-born, sinless Son of God and Son of Man, who alone is the Savior of the world? Do you see that He alone is your only basis of acceptance with God, that you have no righteousness of your own whatsoever by which you may gain acceptance with God in heaven; you must have the righteousness of another be declared to be yours, to be deposited into your account, to be draped over you, to be put on the other side of the scales? Have you taken that decisive step of faith? Have you closed the deal with God, or is the contract still on the table and the pen in your hand, and you've not yet signed your life over to God?"

Let me tell you what will happen if you do not, and then I'm going to tell you what will happen if you will. If you do not - and I hesitate to say this, but not with any being ashamed - you will go to hell forever. Hell is more real than Dallas, Texas. Hell is more real than Dyer Street. It is an eternal lake of fire and brimstone, where there is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. It's more real than you have any idea how real it is. It is a bottomless pit of utter darkness from which there is no escape. And you will have the haunting memory in your mind throughout all eternity of this sermon, and every other gospel presentation you've ever heard, from parents, from a pastor. It will be locked in your mind and haunt you forever. That's what will happen if you do not believe in Jesus Christ.

But if you will, you will be clothed from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. You will be presented faultless before God in heaven, and all God will see is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ that you are wearing. And when God opens the books, He's not going to see your debt, He's going to see the riches of Christ. And when you stand before Him, He will close the books that

contain all of your sin, and He will cast it into the depths of the sea, He will hide it behind His back, and He will remember it no more.

Do you understand the offer that is on the table that is being offered to you, that God has brought you here of all Sundays, of all Sundays – you've could have been here last Sunday going through the genealogies. You were here on this Sunday. That's a divine appointment. And God is here in His perfect timing to meet with you and to do business with you. So you need to do business with God; and in your heart of hearts, commit your life. I mean, a defining moment, as if you're standing at the head of the church and you're about to be married. And your bride comes down the aisle, and you forsake all others and you commit yourself; that is what God is requiring of you ten thousand times ten thousand, greater commitment with the allegiance and loyalty to this God. He will be your shield, and He will be your reward. But if you do not, you have no protection, and you have no reward; you have only damnation and judgment. If you have ever heard the truth in your life, you just heard it. So let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for recording in Your Word this account with Abram, finally coming to the end of himself, finally entering into the kingdom by simple faith. He didn't have to go do anything, he didn't have to become anything, he just had to believe. So, Lord, I pray that You would work in hearts here today, and that You would do business in hearts, that this would be the day of the marketplace of the soul, and that there would be many who would come to commitment in Christ. We pray this in His name. Amen.