

# THE GREAT REWARD

Genesis 15:1-21

Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup> 2010 Morning Service

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Life is a journey. For the believer it is a journey walked with God. Abram walked with his Lord and learnt how to lean upon him and trust him in all the twists and turns of his travelling. The life of Abram is in many ways parallel to ours, and from it we can learn deep lessons that will help each of us survive the journey of faith.

**There are seven practical survival strategies here that we need to learn and apply to our own situations.**

## 1. Trust the Friendship that Really Counts (1)

Abram had given the best land to Lot and had just given a tenth of his possessions to God's representative, Melchizedek. Also, Abram has just refused a great gift from the king of Sodom. Now in verse 1 we read, '**After this** the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.' And what did the Lord say? 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.'

**God is our security, not influential people, like the king of Sodom.** We naturally want powerful and popular friends, and to be connected with influential people at work. But we must learn that the Lord is our shield.

**God is our reward, not possessions like those which Abram gave away.** We naturally tend to want to accumulate wealth, sometimes doing so in a way that does not obey God's commands, or honour him. The Lord is our reward.

*Is the Lord the most important thing in your life? Is God what you value most? Do our possessions possess us? Is the Lord our joy and delight?*

## 2. Bring your Doubts to God (2-5, 8)

Abram is seen as a man of faith who follows God's command to leave his homeland, who trusts in his Lord in a whole variety of life-situations. He believes God and it is credited to him as righteousness. He is the father of faith. And yet, we see here that in the very passage that Abram is commended for his faith he expresses doubt, both in verses 2-5 and verse 8, each side of his

commendation for having faith. We can have strong faith, and yet sometimes doubt. What should we do with our doubts?

**Firstly, we should doubt our doubts.** We should question them, challenge them and investigate them. If God is a God of truth and Jesus is the truth then we have nothing to fear from investigating the truth, whether that truth is scientific, historical, archaeological, theological, or whatever. All truth is God's truth. If you have doubts then ask questions, read, and listen, think – and discover answers.

**Secondly, we should go to God with our doubts and questions.** Handling doubt is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is also a spiritual exercise. Abram goes to God; he asks God; he raises his questions with God. This is what Job did; this is what David did. This is what you and I should do. Doubts are best dealt with on our knees.

*How do you handle your doubts?*

*How does Jesus treat disciples who have doubts? (John 20:24-31)*

### 3. Receiving Righteousness through Faith (6)

How are we made right before God? How do we get to heaven? It is not by good works (Eph 2:8-9). Rather, it is by trusting in God's way of deliverance alone, which is through what Jesus has done for us on the cross when he took the penalty of our sin in our place. To receive this forgiveness we have to trust in Jesus Christ alone, giving up any false trust in our own goodness. Read Romans 4:1-5:2 and James 2:23

*Faith*

*Have you trusted in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation?*

*Read John 3:16*

### 4. Believe the Promise of a People (4-5)

Abram was promised a people, the people of God. He did not see them, but they were promised, and he believed that promise. We see gathering a great multitude from every time and nation and race. God is calling together his people, the Church. They are gathering on earth and they are gathering in heaven. The multitude is enormous. Read Revelation 7:9 and Hebrews 11:11-12.

*The Church*

*Are you a member of this promised people?*

### 5. Believe the Promise of a Homeland (7)

Abram was promised a Homeland for the people he was promised. This was the Promised Land. He had to believe this promise by faith and live in the present as a temporary traveller in a tent. We are the same; we live as strangers and travellers in this world; we look forward to something better. This life is temporary. Our focus should be on heaven. Without the perspective of heaven nothing in this transient existence makes any sense whatsoever. Read Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

*Heaven*  
*Read Heb 11:8-10*

## 6. Remember That Ultimate Blessing Comes Through a Difficult Path (13-16)

Abram is promised a wonderful future for the wonderful people he is promised. However, the path this promised people is to tread is fraught with difficulties. They will be enslaved and ill-treated. Read 13-16. We are never promised an easy path. This realistic view is vital for our journey of faith.

*Realism*  
*Read Psalm 23:4-6*

## 7. God has Guaranteed His Promises (9-21)

These are amazing promises, but how can we be sure of them? Read verses 9-10. The events described here as to how a covenant is secured and agreed in the ancient world are totally alien to us, but contain important encouragements.

**What we have here is an example of God dealing with his people in a way they can relate to.** What is described here was a common way of conducting business in those days. The two parties to the agreement walked through the divided animals, saying in effect that if either of them broke the covenant what happened to the animals would happen to them. God communicated to Abram in a way that Abram could comprehend. This is the way the Lord deals with us. The most amazing example of this is Jesus taking on human flesh.

**What we have here is a profound picture of God's grace.** God, represented as the smoking fire pot and blazing torch, passes through the divided animals for both himself and Abram. God is therefore taking responsibility for keeping the covenant for both parties. He will suffer if Abram or his descendants break the agreement. He will take the penalty upon himself. This is a picture of the cross of Jesus, where the God-man comes to take the punishment we should have received for breaking his law and sinning. What we have here is a picture of the way God saves us. He saves us through Jesus taking the punishment for our sin in our place.

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