

## Count On It

### Genesis 15:1-6

#### Introduction

It had been a rough couple of months for Abram.

For a while everything had been going great. You might even say he was feeling “blessed.” His business was going well, so well in fact that he was now described as “very wealthy.”

Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. (Genesis 13:2).

Even his nephew Lot, who was living with him now, felt the trickle-down effects of that wealth.

Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. (Genesis 13:5)

And that's where the problem began. You see the two of them were so wealthy they needed to diversify.

But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. (Genesis 13:6)

So Lot (the nephew) launched out on his own. It was a friendly separation. In fact, his uncle Abram set him up for success. He let Lot pick the best options for their newly dissolved partnership. With no hesitation.

So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company. (Genesis 13:11)

And despite that small hiccup, everything was still very good. For a while.

Lot was one of those family members who somehow always seemed to get himself into trouble. Maybe you have someone like that in your family. Just when things ought to be perfect, something happens. Hopefully that someone isn't you. But it was Lot. You might even say it was Lot's lot in life to be that person.

This time Lot managed to get himself mixed up in a civil war being waged by four kings in the region, and he ended up as a prisoner of war.

The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions. (Genesis 14:11-12)

When Uncle Abram heard about this, he recruited 318 of his employees – I told you he was wealthy – and together attacked those four kings.

(Abram) recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people. (Genesis 14:16)

Uncle Abram was a brave man. He was a hero to Lot and all the other captives. Invincible. If this would be in 2022, Lot would be wearing a T-shirt that boasted “My uncle trumps four kings.”

From the outside, Abram looked unbeatable. But inside – in that place deep down inside every human heart – Abram carried a deep fear. A fear that he probably never shared with anyone, not even his wife. It ate him up ... but you would never know it to see him. On the outside, he was a conquering hero. But inside he was afraid. And no one knew.

But God knew it. God always knows it. It is one of those irritating things about our God. We build all these protective walls so that no one can find our vulnerable places, but God looks right through them. He knows what is on the other side.

Look at the first verse in our text:

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram.” (Genesis 15:1)

You see, Abram was NEVER afraid when he was in control.

- Moving to a new land? Not a problem.
- Dissolving a partnership with a nephew. We can work it out.
- Four kings? Bring 'em on.

More than anything else, Abram wanted to be a father. He especially wanted son. An heir. Everyone around him had kids. No doubt those 318 employees who helped him defeat the four kings were fathers.

- A son was important, especially in that culture, Someone needed to be to inherit the estate. No son meant that everything he had would given to one of the servants when he died.

This was more than the wish of a typical man. Ten years prior to this text, God had visited Abram in another vision, and promised him that he would have that heir.

“I will make you into a great nation ...” (Genesis 12:2)

Ten years have passed. Abram is 86 years old. For 86 years he and his wife have tried to become parents. This man who can defeat kings can't make a baby. It is beyond his control.

- And, maybe worse yet, the baby has been promised, but the God who made the promise hasn't fulfilled that promise either.

Here's the point where Abram's life intersects ours. And here is the question that unites us with him:

Can I really trust God to do what needs to be done?

When I come up against ...

- those situations that I can't control
- those circumstances that have more question marks than exclamation points
- those times when my confidence is low and my need for assurance is high

... can I put my entire trust in God? Can I depend on Him?

It's easy to answer "yes" when I still have options left to try. But when I'm out of options... When I've done everything I know how to do ...

This week Karen and I learned that a former pastoral colleague of ours is facing a major battle against an extremely rare form of gall bladder cancer. More than a colleague, Dan and I were the #1 comedy team on during our college years at Huntington University. They posted the following on the Caring Bridge website:

Surgery and chemotherapy are inevitable. We know that our Lord is in control of every step through this journey.

How can you "know?" In those moments when your anxiety is the highest, when your need for reassurance is strongest, where does that confidence come from?

Here's is what God did for Abram, and it is what he will do for us too.

### **#1: GOD REMINDED ABRAM TO WHAT WAS TRUE**

Look at verse 2:

I am your shield, your very great reward. (Genesis 15:2)

Bill and Gloria Gaither have written many wonderful Christian songs. One of these was written by Gloria in the late 1960's while she was expecting a child. The couple was going through some terrible problems. Bill had been seriously sick. Their music had been attacked as not being spiritual.

On New Year's Eve, Gloria sat in a dark room experiencing a time of torment and fear. She writes: "I sat alone in the darkness thinking about the rebellious world and all of our problems - and about our baby yet unborn. Who in their right mind would bring a child into a world like this?"

She was at the height of her fear and then something happened. She went on: "I can't quite explain what happened in that next moment, but suddenly I felt released from it

all. The panic that had begun to build inside was gently dispelled by a reassuring presence and a soft voice that kept saying, 'Don't forget the empty tomb, don't forget the empty tomb.' Then I knew I could have that baby and face the future with optimism and trust for I had been reminded that it was all worth it just because He lives."

And then words to one of their best loved songs came flowing to her:

"How sweet to hold a newborn baby,  
and feel the pride and joy he gives;  
but greater still the calm assurance,  
this child can face uncertain days  
because He lives.

Because He lives I can face tomorrow,  
because He lives all fear is gone,  
because I know He holds the future.  
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

For Gloria, the truth was this: "Don't forget the empty tomb."

- My friend Dan shared this verse with those of us who read his post:

The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped. (Psalm 28:7)

- For Abram, the truth was heard in the words of God:

I am your shield, your very great reward. (Genesis 15:2)

## #2: GOD POINTED ABRAM TO WHAT WAS PROMISED

Look at verse 5:

(God) took (Abram) 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."  
(Genesis 15:5)

The promise was NEVER for ONE son. The promise was for a nation. Look again at the original promise in Genesis 12:

I will make you into a great **nation** (Genesis 12:2)

Only God could do that. Everything that God does is bigger than anything I could ever do by myself.

When you realize that God wants to do something in and through you that is far beyond what you could ever dream of doing, the fear goes away. You know He has to do it or it won't get done.

## **APPLICATION**

It was Abram needed. He listened to the words of reassurance. He heard the truth. He heard again the promise. And, as the text conveys:

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)

Whatever you are facing right now, ask God to remind you of what is true – especially what is true about Him and to show you that He is greater than your capabilities. And then believe.

Amen.