

10.05.25

Genesis

Chapter 15 - God's Unseen Guarantees

Things Not Seen (vs. 1-3)

Genesis 15:1-3: 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.”

I was going through this particular message, and I was thinking, “Wow, this is really not for everyone.” And I think the Lord took care of that problem for me. It was very gracious of Him. Sometimes He uses the weather

to do that, doesn't He? So, I guess you're the ones that need to hear this. This passage is dealing with faith, really. We know that Abraham is the paragon of faith, and it's given that example in Romans 4.

Scripture tells us in Galatians 3 at the end of the chapter in verse 29 that we're actually offspring of Abraham by virtue of faith. So, as we believe in Christ, we become, as it were, sons of Abraham and sons of the promise, the same promises that God had bestowed upon Abraham. So, in that regard, clearly all these things are very pertinent to us.

When I consider faith, I realize that it's oftentimes misconstrued. The reason that is, is that everybody always has their own perception of what it means to believe in God. James will actually talk about the demons believe and shudder, that there is a God, that He exists, but certainly it's far more than that. John will emphasize that faith is a relationship and ultimately will end the gospel in which Jesus will simply ask Peter, not “Do you believe Me,” but “Do you love Me?”

Because He knew that if he loved Him, he would put his trust in Him.

This, as we begin to go through, is what we understand God is doing with Abraham. He's building a relationship. And from Genesis at the end of Chapter 11, at the very beginning of Genesis 12, God is calling out Abraham to be and to have a relationship with Him. What does it mean to have a relationship with God? I don't think we can fully fathom that. Isaiah comes before God in Isaiah 6, and he realizes he had no idea what this was about. God is so great, he was taken back by the grandeur and the magnificence of who God was. Abraham's going to learn what it means to have a relationship, but relationships are things that you work on, right? It's not something that just happens. And faith is part of that journey, because you have to learn how to trust somebody in order to have a relationship. If you don't trust the person that you're with, you can't have a relationship. So, this begins the walk of faith. And the walk actually begins with God in the Old Testament, proclaiming to Abraham His promises to

him. And the promises are that He's going to make him a great nation, He's going to make his name great, He's going to bless him, he's going to be a blessing, and all the nations of the earth will benefit from him. That's quite a blessing, isn't it? That's quite a promise when you consider. Abraham will hear this promise, but not fully understand it, not fully comprehend it. Because there's something in all of us that says, "God gives a promise, now we have to kind of work it out for Him." And it's hard for us to perceive and conceive that He is sovereign over all things. So, the process begins.

God calls him out, and as He calls him out, one of the first things He states to him in Genesis 12 is, "You have to leave your family." We would say, "Well, that's kind of drastic, isn't it?" "Well, maybe, but the point is that you can't think like these people that are very influential in your life, because I'm calling you in a very different way of thinking." And we realize that the call of God is very unique, and very few will hear the call. One of the reasons why I'm thinking this is clearly not for everyone, because some of the things I'm going to

be stating to you today are going to make reference to how very different our lives are than the world.

John 10, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Great Shepherd, and His statement in the text is, “I'm the Good Shepherd. I call My sheep, and they come. They hear My voice. They recognize it. They come.” Not everybody recognizes the call of this Shepherd. But for those who do, they're drawn to Him. I don't think they can fully understand or fully comprehend why they are drawn to Him initially. Nevertheless, there is this tug, and as true with Abraham, there's this call, he has to go. And he goes into this place where he hadn't seen before, he has no idea what he's going to be given, and what the days ahead are going to show themselves. He will make mistakes in this relationship, as in all relationships we do. God will remain faithful, though we are oftentimes faithless, and God will continue to call us to Himself. It's a wonderful picture of redemption and reconciliation as we go through and we watch this journey of Abram.

We come now into Chapter 15, and in this chapter, we realize that in the calling, maybe things haven't worked out exactly the way that Abram would think that they should. And I think that's one of the great things that we wrestle with in our lives. I mean, you start off, you have dreams, aspirations, certain thoughts of how things are going to pan out, how things are going to come to fruition, and they just don't seem to follow that pattern. I don't know why, but they don't. I guess it's that the people around you don't cooperate. They don't obviously know the vision that you have. If they did, they would get on board. But nevertheless, there you are struggling because as the days go by, you realize, “This isn't working out. It's not happening the way that I thought it should.”

When you consider that this whole thing of faith is unique in and of itself, we oftentimes think of passages like Hebrews 11, which actually define what faith is. But I just feel a need to clarify to all of us, what exactly does it mean to believe? So, let me quote the verse for you. It's found in Hebrews 11:1.

It reads this way,

(Hebrews 11:1) “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for...”

There's this confident expectation. It's going to happen. There's not a sense of doubt. You're sure it's going to happen.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

You can't see it. You can't understand it. People get into Scripture, “God told me to do this. I don't understand.” Stop. You just went out of the realm of faith. **It's not about understanding. It's about trusting.** How many things do you understand really about God? Give me an idea about how He created the universe. Just give me an inkling. I mean, I know that Scripture said He spoke and it existed, but how did that happen? You know, if you were to kind of try to figure out the science, you're going to be like a lot of the scientists that just ultimately state all these figures, and then at the very end, they go, “But we really don't know what happened.” But the point of the matter is

that God is great and incomprehensible, and we've oftentimes even talked about the fact that every major doctrine and everything about God is paradoxical. I mean, how could He be three and how could He be one? And how could He be everywhere, but yet we go into His presence? I mean, there are so many things about God that just literally are incomprehensible. Faith is the substance. King James would actually use the word, “tangibility” of things not seen. You actually see that stuff.

Paul will write in Romans 8:24,

“... but hope that is seen is not hope...”

“Oh, I can see it.” Well, then it's not hope. Forget it, you just walked out of the realm of hope.

2 Corinthians 4:18 will put it this way,

“...while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen...”

“What are you staring at today?” “Oh, the invisible.”

2 Corinthians 5:7 will say,

“for we walk by faith, not by sight.”

What we've just done is we've repeated things, the fundamental, over and over and over again. That is that we can't see this stuff. Now, we say that in our head, and we even say that we believe in our heart, but when it comes right down to it, what we're really asking God for is something physical, something tangible that we can see, and God has called us out of that realm. This is why this whole process is going to be quite a walk, quite a journey, because the things that we're seeing just don't seem to match up, and God goes, "Stop looking. I'm telling you what it is." And we go, "I'm not seeing it."

There are going to be times in your life in which it feels like God is literally willing to give you almost anything you want except what you really want. You go, "I got this, I got this, I got this, I got this. But God, that's not what I really wanted more than anything else." And God goes, "I know." I mean, in some ways, it almost feels as if God is literally dangling the proverbial carrot in front of our nose going, "See that?" We go, "Yeah, that's what I want." He goes, "Can't have it." There it is.

And promising us these wonderful things and strangely not delivering, depriving us of the very thing that our wishes and aspirations are focused on.

The psalmist will wrestle with this principle in Psalm 73:1, and he'll start off the psalm by saying, “Now, surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. I know that to be true, but you know what? I'm really ticked off because this guy has everything and I have nothing.” Psalm 73, Psalm 37, fundamentally the same points, in which starts off that sense of, “The very thing I want most, I can't seem to grab hold of. He won't let me have it.” Just by way of encouragement, this actually seems to happen to people that God loves the most! So, cheer up. If God really loves you, then you're not getting it. It's going to be further away. It's seen so many times in Scripture. I can just give you a few, and we're going to actually see it in this particular passage.

But if you'll look with me in 1 Samuel 1, you'll see it with a woman by the name of Hannah. It's a very interesting scenario, and once again, I'm not going to go into deep

study of this particular passage, but just by way of example, it's a situation in which a husband has two wives, and that alone is going to cause you problems. "Distress" actually comes from the root word which makes reference to having another wife compete. So, that's where the word "distress" comes out of. So, it's pretty interesting. But anyway, here we are in the text, and the name of the husband is Elkanah, which seems to fundamentally simply mean "created by God". And I suppose in many ways he's perceived himself as God's gift to women.

It says in verse 2,

(1 Samuel 1:2) "He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah..."

Which seems to make reference specifically to her desires for grace; the sense of grace or praying for God's favor is in the name Hannah.

So, here she sits, and yet she doesn't seem to be seeing the grace of God, because of the two wives, she's childless. Now, there's another wife, and her name just simply means "jewel," and she seems to

have it all. She's got the kids, according to the passage. She has children.

If you look in verse 2,

“He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.”

Now, the fact that it uses the word “children” is telling us that there's plural. It's bad enough that she has a child, but now she has children.

And it will actually go on and say in verse 4,

“...all her sons and her daughters.”

I don't know how many kids she had, but wow, talk about overkill.

But it goes on and says in the passage,

(1 Samuel 1:2) “... but Hannah had no children.”

And we're not even talking about one, we're talking about none. So, this is God's favorite. Obviously, this is God's favorite. But you're not feeling it, are you? You're not feeling it because she, the other woman, has everything. You have nothing. But aren't you the one

seeking the favor of God? We'll see. The husband thought, "I'll just pay her off, I mean, I know she's miserable, but I'll throw some little bit of money towards her. It'll make her happy." And it's only going to make her more bitter. By the way, money's just not going to make you happy. It can't heal the pain of the problem. You can throw money at stuff. It's like giving a guy some money that's terminally ill. So, he's breathing his last breath, and you go, "Yeah, but I just opened a bank account for you." I just don't see a lot of comfort in that. And to add problems to this whole scenario, Peninnah, her rival, would come and provoke her bitterly, but actually try to irritate her. That's what the text says if you look in verse 6. So, I mean, it's bad enough that you don't have what you wanted the most. Now, you're being irritated by the person who does have.

And the passage says in verse 7,

(1 Samuel 1:7) "It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her..."

So, what's her solution? She just cries. She cries and she doesn't eat. That's going to work out really well. It's interesting the solutions that we come up with to with our problems, isn't it? Well, of course, the husband thinks that if he just tells her, “Stop crying,” that it's going to work, but it's not. I don't know if your husbands have ever tried that before. It just never has really worked with me.

(1 Samuel 1:8) “Then Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? ...”

“I mean, you got me.” I'm sure at that moment she just went into it.

But it says in verse 9 that she started eating, and you can almost sense a moment of resolve in her moment, like, “I'm going to stop doing this.” And then she goes to God, and she starts crying unto Him. And in the process, as she cries and is greatly distressed to the Lord seeking His favor, she makes a promise to God.

If you look in verse 11, she made a vow. And let me just say this. I believe this is what God was looking for. And

let me say this to all of you. If you're one of the called ones and things aren't happening the way you think they should, this is what God is looking for. He's looking for you to make a commitment to Him. I mean, you were called, and you said, "God wants a relationship with me and I want a relationship with Him." And He goes, "Let's do this." But we haven't been holding up on our bargain. Because the fact of the matter is, we have this one thing that we really, really, really want, and God says, "You've got to want Me more than that." Ultimately, Jesus will come to Peter and He goes, "Do you love Me more than these? Because you have to love Me more than all that stuff." I think of it like a woman coming up to a man and going, "Give me a really, really, really nice, expensive, big diamond ring. Maybe 2 or 3 carats, not really picky about that. Maybe just really big and beautiful. And if I really, really like it, I just might marry you." And I think a lot of times we come before the Lord and say, "You know, I really, really, really want this one thing, and if You give it to me, I just might have a relationship with You." And God goes, "That's not how we start

relationships.” God was waiting for this commitment, and He had something greater in store for Hannah. Do you know of any of the children that Peninnah had? Not one. Do you know much about her? Hardly anything, except that she was an irritant. But what do you know about Hannah and about her son, Samuel? God desires to bless us in a great way, far beyond what we could ask or think. But you've got to love Him more.

Oftentimes, things don't work out. I was thinking about the whole concept with Jacob and Esau. Jacob really wanted the blessing of God. He was so wanting the blessing of God that he was willing to beg, cheat, steal, and wrestle. Whatever he had to do, he was going to get that blessing. That was a pursuit of his. And yet, if you were to look at Esau and Jacob, if you were to follow throughout the Book of Genesis, what you see is that they have an interesting meeting, and they're going to come to meeting each other, and Esau comes with 400 soldier men. He's already kind of a nation. In fact, you'll read a little bit further on, where he has all these sons, and they're all chiefs, 11 chiefs. I mean, the

Edomites became a great and powerful nation. And Jacob has his family of kids and animals, and he's pretty much cowardly coming up, in fact, putting the women and the kids first when he comes to meet Esau, realizing that Esau is far greater a nation than he is. He's just at the beginnings. It doesn't look like Jacob is the blessed one. It's almost as if God is withholding. Doesn't it seem that way?

David had to wrestle with this whole particular scenario in 1 Samuel 27. David actually comes to the end of his rope. And his statement is that, "Though I've been anointed and though, you know, I've been told that I was going to be the king. It looks like it's not going to happen." And I just want you to see, since you're in Samuel. If you look with me in 1 Samuel 27, you'll see an interesting response by David as he comes to a place in which things are not panning out the way that he thought that they should. He was anointed a king. He should be king, right? But Saul continues to go after him.

And his statement is, if you look with me in 1 Samuel 27:1, it reads this way,

“Then David said to himself...”

Now, there's always great counsel when you're seeking yourself as the counselor. It's not going to make a whole lot of sense.

“Then David said to himself, “Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand.””

Now, there's some interesting points within the passage, but I just want you to see that David is fundamentally prognosticating his future. He's talking to himself, “This is the way it's going to happen.” How many times have you done that? “I think this is the way it's going to happen.” Maybe it's not working out, so you go, “Okay, it's going to continue to not work out. And so, I’ve got to prepare for it not working out.” It's called plan B. So, you go into plan B mode and you start saying, “Well, this is what's going to happen.” So,

within the passage, he actually prognosticates how he's going to die. "If I stay here, I'm going to die at the hand of Saul." And how his future is going to unfold. He actually prognosticates within the passage what Saul is going to do. So, he's not only going into the future about what's going to happen to him, but what Saul's going to do. Thus, in the whole text, what he begins to do is he devises a plan to avert himself from what he thinks is going to happen. I've seen a lot of people, they live their life that way. "I think this is going to happen." So, what are you going to do? "Well, I'm going to go here. I'm going to do this." Okay, why? "Because I think this is going to happen." So, they live their life in the realm of, I would say, an alternate universe that they've created in order to deal with their problems. So, he not only settles in this particular passage for plan B, but he compromises literally everything that he once valued. I mean, he starts off as a kid, and he's going to fight the giants, and you can't let these Philistines curse God, and now, he's joining the Philistines! He's living in the land of the Philistines, with the Philistines, going on their side. He forfeits completely, at this moment,

God's plan for his life. And he says, “I guess it's not going to happen.” Because things are not working out the way that he thought. Maybe God is doing something in his life. Do you ever think about that? Do you ever think that maybe God is not withholding things?

There's a great passage that we oftentimes quote. It's found in Psalm 84:11.

It reads this way,

(Psalm 84:11) “For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD gives grace and glory;
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk
uprightly.”

Do you believe that? That's a hard nut to swallow when things aren't going well.

(Psalm 84:12) “O LORD of hosts,
How blessed is the man who trusts in You!”

The psalmist will write in Psalm 138:8,

“The LORD will accomplish what concerns me...”

He'll go on and state in Psalm 57:2,

“I will cry to God Most High,
To God who accomplishes all things for me.”

Wow. That's pretty bold, isn't it? That's pretty bold.

We come to this passage and Abraham's going through a situation that just, well, things aren't working out the way that he thought. I mean, look, God called him, right? And in God's calling him, we know right off the bat, Genesis 11, that his wife couldn't have children. But then God goes and makes this crazy promise that he's going to be a great nation. Now, how in the world is that going to happen? And of course, he starts immediately trying to figure out, “Well, it's got to be through Lot, my nephew, so we've got to drag this guy along with us.” And of course, that's caused all kinds of problems. And now, he's dealing with the whole issue of Lot's drawn to Sodom, and “This isn't going to work out. So, I don't know how it's going to work out.” In the midst of this, he goes and tries to be the savior himself. And in so doing, he realizes that the greater blessings come from putting the Lord first. And so, he does. As he comes and he worships the Lord before

Melchizedek, after this whole commitment thing, as he says before God, “I promise You, I'm not going to take anything from the world. I'm just going to depend on You.” And all that really sounds good, and it is a wonderful statement. God is going to reward that by virtue of coming into His presence. Because as we come into Chapter 15, God comes to him and He goes, “Okay, now I want to talk to you. You've made a commitment to Me. You've made a vow to me. You made a promise. And I'm hearing you say, we've got a relationship here. So, let me tell you all I want to do for you.”

The statement goes this way,

(Genesis 15:1) “After these things...”

That is to say, after, really, Abraham had made this wonderful commitment to God.

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying...”

I like the way that the whole thing is worded. The way that it's worded within the passage is, “After these

things the word of the LORD came.” Then it goes, “in a vision”. So, we actually see the word. Oh, not letters. The word. John 1 will talk about, “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” It would be literally the same words if it were transliterated into the Greek that's used in this passage, that the word became visible. Wow. God was visiting him. Christ was visiting him.

And he says this, as we look at Christ oftentimes with the disciples, “Don't fear. Don't be afraid. Peace be with you. Well-being, success.”

“... Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great.”

(Genesis 15:2) Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me...”

I think he missed the point.

“... since I am childless...”

Do you kind of get a feeling where he's focused?

“... since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?””

The way that he's described in this passage is “the possessor of my house, the son of my possession.” I may be speculating a little bit too far, but it seems as if by the wording that perhaps Eliezer was born when he was up in Damascus, and it was like he became a part of the family. And so, there are those that come in your family and you go, “He's talking about this one, not a kid for me.”

(Genesis 15:3) “And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me...”

I don't know if that's a hint or what.

“... “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.”

“He must be the one we're talking about, God. I just want to clarify, not bitter. I just want to make sure that we're on the same page. So, the way that I see this.”

And you know, there are times that, you know, God works in our lives, and He says, “This is the way it's

going to happen,” and we try to figure it out, and it doesn't happen that way, and we go, “So, it's probably going to happen another way.” And God fundamentally will ultimately come to the point in saying, “Stop. I'll take care of that stuff.” I think we get into a lot of problems when we try to figure out how God's going to work. Quit trying to tell God what He's going to do. It's like David, “I think this is what's going to happen.” And I can just hear, from heaven. “Stop. I already told you that you were going to be king. I have great things in store for you. I've already made you promises that are going to be fulfilled. It has nothing to do with you.” You know, we get our calculator out and we try to figure out how it's going to come out.

If you back up into verse 1, what God says to Abraham is really a key phrase. First of all, “Don't fear, Abram.” What is he afraid of? Well, the passage actually reveals, as we go on, what he's afraid of. Because in the passage, the fear seems to be the greatest fear. He obviously doesn't seem to be afraid of going to war. I mean, he takes 318 men to fight nations. And so, there

doesn't seem to be a fear in that regard. What he seems to be afraid of is not getting what he loves the most, what he desires most. And I think that's probably one of the greatest fears that most of us have. People come to the end of their life and they have these bucket lists. What's one of their greatest fears? “I don't finish the bucket.” Because they feel like they have to have this experience or have these things, and so they're afraid. They're afraid. God turns to Abram and goes, “Don't be afraid of that.”

What's His answer? Look at the passage.

“... I am a shield to you...”

Now, the most of us, we go, “Oh, okay, that's nice.” You know, when you think of shield, of course, the fundamental word makes reference to something that covers and protects, but it goes into the realm of that which surrounds. And the picture is, and what God is literally stating is, “I'm going to shelter and protect and surround and not let anybody take what you value the most.” It's a very interesting statement, because there are things in our life that you wonder, “Why do I value

this so much?" And God goes, "Well, I made you. I put that in you."

I mean, why would Scripture give us a passage such as, in Psalm 37, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart." Now, I've heard a lot of people exegete the text, but you can't get away from the fact that "I'll give you your desires." Now, people say, you get right with God, you'll have the right desires. That's true, but there are desires that are good that all of us have, that God has implanted even within us as He created us. A desire for a relationship, a desire maybe perhaps to be parent, a desire to..., and you can go down the list, which are good desires, they're not bad desires. The problem is that we put the desire before God. And for those that are God's children, who the Lord loves, for those who God loves, He's not going to give you that right away because He wants you to love Him more. He's going to give you something that will guarantee all the blessings Himself.

The way the text reads,

(Genesis 15:1) “... “Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you...””

Watch the last phrase here. In fact, many of your Bibles will actually off to the side translate it more accurately, which mine does as well, “Your very great reward.” The text is literally saying, “I'm your reward. The thing you're looking for is Me.” We go, “Well, why would we look for You?” “Because I'm the One that protects all of these things that are good for you. I'm the One that won't let anybody take it from you.” “Wait a minute, God, You're the One that took it from me.” No, the problem is you've been going to the wrong resources trying to get things that are substandard.

In fact, the very next passage, God will say in verse 4, (Genesis 15:4) “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.””

“Do I have to draw a picture of a body? It's going to come from there. It's going to come from you.” And He's going to keep clarifying this. You say, “Well, why

does God have to keep clarifying?” And I would say the answer is, because man keeps saying, “I guess it's going to be some other way. I guess it's going to come through some other means.”

Philippians 3 talks about this fundamental truth. And basically, Paul comes before God and he says, “You know what? I've come to the point, whatever things were gained from me, I count as loss from knowing You.” You said you wanted to have a relationship. You heard the calling. You heard God say, “Come,” and you went. You said that you wanted to love God more than anything. God's going to hold you to it. And there are going to be times that you're going to start embracing and focusing on this one thing you don't have, and you're going to say, “God's robbing me of that,” and God says, “No, I'm holding it until you put Me first. When you put Me first...” I mean, we know the story. Does God give Abraham a child? He gives him a child. What's very interesting, if you look in Genesis 22, where he is called upon to actually offer his son on the altar, which, wow, it's a huge leap for Abram. Then, as

he begins to give the offering, God rescues, and He says, “No, I'm going to take care of this.”

It is in this context, if you drop on down to verse 20, that after God sees that he desires God more than his greatest wish on earth, God says, “I guess We can tell him then what's going on with his brother.” Now, remember, his brother was back in Haran, right? So, he had two brothers. One died. But his one brother died, Haran, who already had three children, two girls and one boy, Lot, before he died. I mean, that could have stuck with him, right? But he had another brother by the name of Nahor, and Nahor kind of stayed up there. And I think one of the reasons why God oftentimes separates us is He goes, “Look, I don't want them telling you that you're worthless because you don't have the same thing they have. So, I'm going to separate you.” So, at this juncture, Abraham had no idea whether his brother had kids or not. But God gave him this son, Isaac, and He says, “Now, all your hopes and aspirations are going to come through him because that's the guy.” And then He turns, and He

says, “Now, I can tell him what was going on with his brother.”

If you read with me, verse 20, it reads this way.

(Genesis 22:20) “Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor.”

And you go, “How many kids did he have?” And I count twelve. He already had his twelve before Abraham had his one. In fact, at this juncture, Nahor is actually having grandkids. It will be the granddaughter that will marry Isaac. Why did God withhold this information from him? Because He didn't want that waving in his face. But God had always wanted something greater for Abraham. If you are one of those that feel like it just seems to be eluding you, that's a good thing. That's God saying, “You're different. You and I are going to have a relationship. Then from the relationship, I'm going to protect everything you have, and I'm not going to let anybody touch it. Not one good thing am I going to withhold.”

You've got to read with me in Psalm 73. As we look at this passage, and we talked about that verse 1, “Surely God is good,” right? I know He is. I’m just not feeling it.

(Psalm 73:1) “Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!

(Psalm 73:2) But as for me, my feet came close to
stumbling,

My steps had almost slipped.

(Psalm 73:3) For I was envious of the arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

(Psalm 73:4) For there are no pains...”

Everything seems to be going well with them, and God goes, “That's because they're not My kids.” I mean, have you ever thought about that? I mean, you're looking around, and it seems like they literally are getting whatever they want, and God goes, “That's what they get to do. They get to get whatever they want. But watch them as the years go by. Whatever they want does not only not make them happy, but it also causes their life to be miserable.” I mean, Ecclesiastes says, it

doesn't matter if you have a hundred kids. They could all be miserable. A hundred miserable kids. But of course, it seems like they have no troubles.

And in verse 6,

(Psalm 73:6) “Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.

(Psalm 73:7) Their eye bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of their heart run riot.

(Psalm 73:8) They mock and wickedly speak of
oppression;
They speak from on high.”

And you go, “Wow, I'm the loser.” And God goes, “You're thinking like them.”

Where's the change within the passage? Well, the change in the passage, in verse 15, begins, “If I said these things that I'm thinking, I would have betrayed the generation of my faith and the people that I minister to.”

(Psalm 73:16) “When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight

(Psalm 73:17) Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.”

“And then I perceived what was really, really
important.”

(Psalm 73:18) “Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.

(Psalm 73:19) How they are destroyed in a moment!
They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!

(Psalm 73:20) Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.

(Psalm 73:21) When my heart was embittered
And I was pierced within,

(Psalm 73:22) Then I was senseless and ignorant;
I was like a beast before You.

(Psalm 73:23) Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.

(Psalm 73:24) With Your counsel You will guide me,
And afterward receive me to glory.

(Psalm 73:25) Whom have I in heaven but You?
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.”

Oh, that's what we need to get. See, we talk to God, and we go, “If You just give me that one thing I want, then we can have a relationship.” And God says, “No, then that one thing is what you love. What we need to do is have the relationship, and then not one good thing will I withhold.”

Verse 25 reads this way,

“Whom have I in heaven but You?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

(Psalm 73:26) My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

(Psalm 73:27) For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;

You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.

(Psalm 73:28) But as for me, the nearness of God is my good...”

Well, what does that mean? What will you then realize?

Well, one more passage, if you look with me in Psalm 47, we'll clarify this. And you know, this is a great

Psalm of praise. It states at the very beginning, clap your hands, shout for joy. Certainly, the Lord is good. There's nothing that He doesn't control.

(Psalm 47:2) “... A great King over all the earth.

(Psalm 47:3) He subdues peoples under us
And nations under our feet.”

But verse 4 is a verse sometimes skipped over, and I want you to really focus on verse 4.

It reads this way,

(Psalm 47:4) “He chooses our inheritance for us...”

That's a different way of thinking, isn't it? Because I have an idea of the inheritance that will really, really, really make me happy, and God says, “Have a relationship with Me and I'll show you what will make you happy.” I mean, had you told me as a youth, “You're going to be a pastor and you're going to be really happy doing it,” I would have said, “You're crazy. You have no idea who you're talking to. You don't know what I'm like.” And sure enough, God had an inheritance for me that had nothing to do with my

dreams and aspirations. But I remember the day that I said to Him, “I'm going to let You choose my inheritance for me.” We call that the day of surrender. *“Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee.”* “Not one thing will I withhold.”

“He chooses our inheritance for us,
The glory of Jacob whom He loves.”

I suppose there were times where Jacob goes, “I don't feel loved. Look at Esau.” But God says, “I have greater things for you, Jacob, beyond what you could even imagine.” God tells Abraham, “I want you to walk through the country, and I want you to see the inheritance that I've given you.” Abraham kind of goes on the trek, and then it says that he settles in the oaks of Mamre. A very interesting picture. He doesn't go all around. He just kind of goes a little ways, and then he settles. And then, of course, as we were talking about, where he settles is where he can see Lot. He can see Sodom and Gomorrah. So, he can keep an eye on Lot. And once again, his focus is still there.

By the time we come to the end of Chapter 15 in Genesis, God will fundamentally say, “Okay, you've done your walking around. Now, let Me show you what I really have for you.” We get fixated on things, and we sit ourselves down in a certain little area, and we go, “I guess these are the promises of God.” And God goes, “You have no idea.” The disciples will say, “Look, we've given up everything to follow You. What do we get?” And Christ says, “Many more things in this life and in the ages to come.” And I don't think they could have imagined the things that God was going to give them. It's hard for us to believe that, but it's harder for us to put the relationship in front of that one thing that we love so much. If you're struggling with that, join the club. But understand this, that God is doing that because He loves you and He wants something greater for you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for the things You don't give us right away and

for the things that seem to have been taken away from us. For we have a calling upon ourselves and we're not like the world. They go out and get whatever they want. We have seen it doesn't make them happy. It doesn't fulfill them. Ecclesiastes will even say it made him upset. Everything is seen as futile and vain, empty. Lord, we come before You today and we say, we heard the calling, and we did say we wanted to have a relationship with You. We had no idea what the relationship was even really about. We're used to thinking selfishly, and we're used to thinking in terms of getting stuff in order to have a relationship, but You're teaching us something far greater.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what I'm asking you to do is set aside that one thing. Now, delight yourself in the Lord. You know what that word “delight” means? It's a picture of celebration. It's a picture of you having a feast and saying, “Now, this is luxury. This is what I wanted.” And watch. Not one good thing will He withhold. You've put the cart before the horse, but you also had asked for something

greater, and God has begun a good work and He's going to finish it. Surrender your life today. Find that peace that passes all understanding. Watch God work in your life. We're going to follow this story with Abraham, and we're going to find he was not the loser by doing this.