

Series: God & Abraham #1270

Title: Genesis 15.1

God Speaks and Abram Listens

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Open your Bible to Genesis chapter 15. You are joining us at a great time because we are returning today to the lives of God and Abraham in Genesis chapter 15. For those of you who are new to the broadcast and podcast, when we last left off on July 1st of this year, we finished Abram's story at the end of Genesis chapter 14. Soon I will mention that, and all of the podcast episodes that cover that chapter are available to you, marked by Genesis 14 and the verse number in the title.

Just go to godisministry.org, that's godisministry.o-r-g. Feel free, as always, to reach out to me by email mark@godisministry.org, if you have any questions or comments. You can get caught up on what has already been said about Abraham in relation to God on the free God Is podcasts.

Now if you have your place in the Book of Genesis, follow along as I read the Word of God for us. Genesis 15, verses 1-6. And I read from the New American Standard Bible (the 1995 edition). Genesis 15, 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.'**

² Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' ³ And Abram said, 'Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.' ⁴ Then behold, the word of the Lord came to [Abram], saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.' ⁵ And [God] took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to [Abram], 'So shall your descendants be.' ⁶ Then [Abram] believed in the Lord; and [the Lord] reckoned it to [Abram] as righteousness."

You may not believe me, just hearing this [red], but by the time we are finished talking about this text, I believe you will agree with me this is an astonishing part of Scripture. The series is God and Abraham and here again are God and Abram (his name still not changed to Abraham). And, as is our habit, let's take this verse by verse and at times word by word and see this encounter between God and man for what it is. I am totally dependent on the Spirit of God to help me make this clear to you, so pray for me. I mean it. Ask the Lord to grant me His grace, wisdom, and discernment. And, be sure of this, as you pray for me, I am praying for you! I am seeking the Lord for His Word to speak in a profound way in your life.

Verse 1 begins, "After these things..." We ask: after what things? We answer: after the events of the previous chapters, especially chapter 14. And, as I already said, you can access my commentary on that chapter by visiting the God Is website. It is after these things that the words and events of chapter 15 commence. Verse 1 continues, "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram..." Let's pause right here. "The word of the Lord came to Abram." Here is holy God and He is going to speak and His word will be heard by His servant Abram. And this is the pattern in Abram's life.

When you read Abraham's story in these opening chapters of the Genesis, pay attention to the interaction between God and Abraham. When you do, you will see that God does most of the talking and Abraham most of the listening. In fact, it is here (in Genesis 15) that Abram speaks to God for the first time. We will read and discuss what he says down in verses 2 and 3. Then, again, Abram speaks to God in Genesis chapter 15, verse 8, again asking a question. Over in chapter 17 and verse 18 Abraham appeals to God on behalf of Ishmael. And in Genesis chapter 18, verses 23-33 Abraham of course speaks to God in a *dynamic* prayer on behalf of the people of Sodom. And, finally, in Genesis 22, preparing to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham says to God, "Here I am."

Those references again are: Genesis 15.2, 3 and 8. Genesis 17, verse 18. Genesis 18, verses 23-33, and Genesis 22, verse 11.

Apart from these occasions, Abraham listens to God. In fact, in the verses I have read from chapter 15 Abram asks so many questions of the Lord that Moses, the author of Genesis, saw fit to assure us that Abram's faith was very much intact, saying, "Then [Abram] believed in the Lord; and [the Lord] reckoned it to [Abram] as righteousness." Meaning, in part, how odd it was to Moses to learn that Abram, mostly silent at this point, *finally* speaks up in response to the Lord.

Here, the Holy Spirit is our Teacher: Abram listened to God. He was quick to listen and slow to speak. What about us? Take prayer for instance. Many Christians beat themselves up because we think we do not have enough to say to God. We struggle because we do not know what to say or how to say it. Our prayers seem too short, rudimentary, garbled to really take hold in the ear of God. But when did the Lord say prayer was *all* about us doing *all* the talking? What about being a good listener in the presence of the Almighty One? Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

Look! *I am* saying this, and I can *talk*! I talk to you every weekday (ha, those of you who can stand it). And I like to have a good chin wag with the Lord. I tell Him all sorts of things about myself and others (those whom have asked me to pray for them). But listening is harder for me. I think, because listening – actively hearing from God – requires quiet. Me being silent but also to rest in an atmosphere of silence. No music. No notifications sounding off on the mobile phone. Not the distractions of someone else entering and exiting my presence or hammering away at something in the other room. That's what is hard. And why I do enjoy a good walk in the woods when possible, and especially waking early in the morning before anyone else. The pre-dawn hours are *very quiet*.

Before dawn, I have found, is a very effective time of the day to hear from the Lord. Now by "hearing from the Lord," I do not mean that He is speaking to me audibly and giving me some extra divine revelation. You know I believe God's revelation – all He wants to say to us – is said here, contained in the pages of the Bible. So *that* is what I mean by hearing from Him. To sit peacefully with the Word and to read a portion and then to silently think on what has been read. The Scripture is feeding the mind and the heart and settling me down around the *Truth*. I like to match the day's date to the corresponding number in the Book of the Psalms. And the Proverbs. Read the chapter. Think on it. Listen. Close my eyes and meditate on God's voice through the Scripture. He speaks.

Now, lest you should think I am a master at this, I am not. I have to be intentional, and I need much more practice. But whenever I manage to do this, I feel like Abram – when we are quiet, God speaks. And we can clearly hear Him. When we exist in a noisy and raucous environment, and when we do all the talking, God is hard to hear. And *that* is when some of us have a crisis within faith because we feel like, Lord, I am really crying out to you here and you are not answering! As we will see with Abram, it is apropos to speak to the Lord, and to ask Him questions about our life. This is appropriate. *But*, Abram spends a lot of quality time listening before he ever says a word. There is a lesson in this for me, and maybe for you?

Genesis 15, verse 1 makes plain: God speaks and Abram listens.

So this is where we begin in this new chapter. Monday, Lord willing, we will talk about *the way* in which God speaks. To make good use of our time together, I highly recommend that whatever you learn each day you apply to your life within the same day or night. And since this is Friday you now have the whole weekend ahead of you to be slow to speak and quick to listen to God in your life. How might you do that? In terms of how you might listen to the Lord when you create the space and time to do so, can I recommend Genesis chapter 15? Give it a good read and ask God: what do you want to say to me?

Earlier this week we talked about the immutability of God. Perhaps you want to give more thought and study to that doctrine? A good use of your time could be to go to the God Is website and listen to those broadcasts as podcasts again. Or to pick up the book by John Frame I recommended and to read that? My hope, and expectation, is that you will not let what you are learning end when I sign off, but that you will pursue the truth about the Living God further. So, will you do that? I hope so.

Enjoy the weekend and come back on Monday because God Is!

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