

# 19. The God who Assures the Fearful Faithful (2007)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Genesis chapter 15. And today it's all about the God who assures the fearful faithful.

I wonder if you often find yourself fearful. Fearful about your future, perhaps about your family, maybe about your health or your work or just about the world in general or about old age or approaching death, all of these things that life forces us to face up to.

Maybe you are a Christian and you do, of course, trust in God's promises, but when you look around at the world as we see it, when you look at your own life, when you try and square it all up with what we actually seem to possess now, maybe you fear sometimes that actually you've got it all wrong.

Maybe sometimes you wonder to yourself, is it really true? Can I really believe all that God has said, all that he's called me to? What if I've given my life to something and actually it all proves out just to be a waste of time?

I have that thought almost every Sunday morning when I wake up. Maybe for you it's Monday morning. Maybe you look into your own life, into your heart, and you fear, for a different reason, perhaps you fear, that God actually couldn't ever really have had anything to do with you.

[ 1 : 40 ] Has God ever really called me? Maybe you look at yourself and you think, actually, if I'm honest, that's such a hopeless case, I found it hard to believe that I could really be one of God's children at all.

Maybe you feel all these struggles that you face in your Christian life are actually evidence that you're not really God's at all, that you're not really saved or safe.

Or maybe your fear is a hundred other kinds of things that come into our minds all of the time. Well, if that's you, and I suspect it's certainly some of us today, then this is a chapter for you.

Because it's all about the God who loves to assure the fearful faithful. Fear not, do you see, in verse 1, is God's very first word to Abraham. It's a phrase, actually, that phrase, fear not.

It comes well over a hundred times in the Bible. It's nearly always a message from God to his beloved people to encourage them, to reassure them, to strengthen them in their walk of faith and their trust in him.

[ 2 : 44 ] Just think of all the fear nots in the Bible. Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, Moses said on the brink of the Red Sea with the Egyptians behind them. Fear not, said Isaiah, for I have redeemed you, I have called you, you are mine.

To a people that he was filling with warnings of exile. Fear not, Mary, for you will find favour with God.

Fear not, little flock, said the Lord Jesus, for it's your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom. Our God loves to say, fear not. He loves to assure the fearful faithful, and he loves to encourage us to grow in faith and to trust him more and more, to trust his promises, to trust his ways.

And that's what this chapter is all about. God knows that his people are prone to fears and to doubts, and he knows why. Because we don't understand him well enough.

We don't understand his purposes, his ways. Sometimes his ways to us seem to be very mysterious indeed, as the hymn says. Mysterious, at least to us, because we find it so hard to understand, and therefore we find it hard, don't we, to keep trusting God.

[ 4 : 06 ] But that's why God's given us the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Peter, do you remember, he tells us that the prophets of the old days, they knew that they were serving us in the things that they wrote.

And of course Moses is the greatest prophet of all, isn't he? So this chapter is very much for us. And its message therefore must be very necessary, mustn't it, for believers today, like you and me.

If you read Hebrews 6, in fact, it makes it very explicit. In talking about God's promise to Abraham, the writer says this, and remember who he's writing to, he's writing to New Testament Christians who are very fearful, who need real encouragement to hold fast to their hope, not to give up, not to throw in the towel for all sorts of reasons.

But he says this, we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of faith until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises.

Thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. You see, that's what God wants for us, for you and for me as Christians today. He wants us to have full assurance of hope right till the end, so that we too will inherit all that God has promised to us.

[ 5 : 31 ] And we'll find that, says the writer to the Hebrews, by imitating Abraham's faith. And we can only do that, of course, if we learn what Abraham learned about his wonderful God, the unchanging God, the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

So I want to look at what this chapter here teaches us about the God who assures the fearful faithful. Just look briefly at the passage as a whole.

You'll see the structure, I think, is quite clear. It divides into two parallel sections, verses 1 to 5, and then verses 7 to the end. Each one begins with God speaking. I am your vision.

I am the Lord. Then a question from Abraham. O Lord God, and then a reassuring sign from God. And in verses 1 to 5, the focus is all on Abraham's offspring.

And verses 7 to 21, it's all on God's promise of the land and how he's going to possess the land. And in between, of course, is that famous verse, verse 6, which Bruce Waltke, in his commentary, calls a Janus.

[ 6 : 37 ] Remember, Janus is the God of doorways. It looks backward and looks forward. In other words, it's the hinge point of the chapter. It sums up Abraham's response to all of God's reassuring revelation to him in the first part and in the second part of the chapter.

So we'll look at the chapter taking both parts together because they belong together. They're both parts of God's great covenant promise to Abraham. Verse 18, you'll see, sums it up, puts them both together.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying to your offspring, I give this land. Offspring and land.

So first then, here's the first thing we see in this chapter. Abraham remonstrating with God. And that's what demonstrates his need for God's reassurance, doesn't it?

Abraham's faithful. There's no doubt about that at all. We've read chapter 13 and 14. We've seen that. But nevertheless, he is fearful. And his questions to God in verses 2 and 3 and verse 8 make that very plain.

[ 7 : 45 ] But as you can see, God doesn't wait for Abraham's questions. He actually addresses Abraham's fears straight away, doesn't he, in verse 1. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision, Fear not, Abraham.

I think it's a great comfort, isn't it? That God knows what's bothering us even before we seem to know it ourselves. He's the great psychiatrist, isn't he, as well as the great physician.

He knows our hearts. He knows our minds. Why did God intervene in this vision just then, after these things? Well, it may be that Abraham was afraid of reprisals from these kings that he's been fighting in the previous chapter.

I have no doubt there's an element of that. But as I said, I think these things actually refers to everything we've read about Abraham's story from the beginning of chapter 12, since God first called him to go to the land and promised him all the things that would follow on once he did go to the land.

Well, he's been all through the land. He's been through all kinds of tests and trials. And yes, God has been true to his word, hasn't he? He's been his protector. He's been his provider.

[ 8 : 54 ] He's cursed those who came against Abraham. He's blessed those who allied themselves with Abraham. But a long time has passed, hasn't it?

And there still doesn't seem to be any sign of the particular blessings that God promised Abraham. Do you remember? He would give him offspring, progeny, to begin a great nation.

And he would give him a land, a resting place for that people to dwell in and to prosper in. And you see, we've read about the days of all these things, all these things that have happened to Abraham and yet, not the things that Abraham's longing for.

Probably ten years or so have passed. If you look at the end of chapter 16, he's 86, where he was 75 when we began the story in chapter 12. And none of these things have materialized.

And God knows what's gnawing away in Abraham's mind. Of course he does. Maybe he wants to draw it out of Abraham though so Abraham can face up to his fears and find the true help that he needs.

[ 10 : 06 ] So he says, Abraham, I'm your shield, verse 1. I'm your rewarder. I'm the one who is directing all of your ways, verse 8. According to the promise for your destiny in this land.

I am doing all of these things. But hang on, says Abraham, that's exactly the problem you see. That's what's bothering me, Lord. I just can't see it. You keep saying it, but when am I going to see it?

You look back over the page to chapter 13 and verse 15, you'll see exactly Abraham's point. Here's God speaking to him. For all the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth. Well, that's the promise. But here's the reality in chapter 15, verse 2 and 3. I remain childless. I don't have any offspring.

My heir is going to be this foreigner. So how do I know that you can do this? Now look at the land situation.

[ 11 : 12 ] Well, you say, Lord, it's all mine, but come on. It's full of kings on the rampage everywhere, kidnapping people and all that sort of thing.

It's full of all these hostile tribes. All I've got is my tents. I'm just camping here. It's all very well for you to get me to march all around the land and name it and claim it, but come on. It doesn't seem to be real.

How am I to know that I can really possess this land? How do I know you'll really do this? Well, don't be harsh with Abraham. I'm sure you yourself have often said similar things to God, haven't you?

I have. We read the Bible. It's full of God's promises to us. All His promises in Jesus Christ are yes and amen. He talks about life in all its fullness.

He talks about victory and the deliverance from sin and from death and from hell. He talks about the promise to make us holy, to make us complete in Him. And the Bible keeps on saying that to us, doesn't it?

[ 12 : 17 ] We keep thinking to ourselves, well, when are we going to see it, really? Our lives, by contrast, seem to be quite different, so much more feeble, don't they? Mine does, anyway.

But you see, God is saying to us, be encouraged, you're in good company here. These questions, listen, these questions aren't questions of unbelief, they're questions of faith.

It's the person who knows God and talks to God and honours God that remonstrates with God in this way. Abraham's full of respect. He's not disrespecting God.

Oh, Lord God, he calls him. Oh, Sovereign Lord and Master, the NIV has. And he's full of faith, too, if you doubt that. Remember the words we began the service with from Romans chapter 4.

No distrust made Abraham waver concerning the promise of God. No, these are questions of faith, Abraham's asking. But still, he's remonstrating with God, isn't he?

[ 13 : 19 ] It's a cry of faith, it's a cry for understanding, to help him go on trusting, to help him go on seeing the invisible. Because it's hard, isn't it, to trust God and his ways when you're just a human being like us?

It always has been, always will be. How long, O Lord, before you answer my prayer and do what you've promised? That's the great cry of the faithful all through Scripture, isn't it? Read the Psalms.

How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? Psalm 13. How long will you be angry with your people's prayers? Not answer them. Psalm 80.

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Are his promises at an end for all time? Psalm 77. These are the Psalms of the faithful. Well, you see, that was Abraham here, remonstrating with God because although he did trust God, it's hard to go on trusting God.

It's hard to see the invisible. And we need reassurance from God, don't we? And God knows that and he gives that reassurance. Of course, it is possible to disbelieve God altogether.

[ 14 : 29 ] That's something quite different, to scorn him, to disobey him, to refuse him. That's quite different. And God won't give any assurance to somebody who's like that.

But to Abraham and to those who imitate him and his faith in God, who are friends of God, who are struggling to be faithful, then yes, God will give reassurance.

And he'll do it wonderfully in both word and deed. So if that's you today, take heart. And that brings us to our second point in the main bulk of this passage and that's Abraham's revelation from God.

It's what God reveals to Abraham in promise and in the seal of this covenant that he makes with him that is the means of Abraham's reassurance. And that's always true if you're a Christian believer who lacks assurance of your faith.

If you lack assurance about your daily walk with God, let me tell you this, you will not find any help at all by examining yourself. Don't do it. You will only find help by looking out of yourself and by examining God and his gospel and his great covenant of grace.

[ 15 : 38 ] That's where your assurance comes from, not from inside you. It's not more about myself and my desires and my holiness. It's more, more about Jesus as the old hymn says.

More of his saving fullness to know. More of his love who died for me. And that's what God is teaching Abraham in this chapter. That's what it's all about.

The means of reassuring Abraham's faith here was God's revelation to him to teach him more and more of what it means that he is the covenant God. So I want to pick out here four things that God reveals to Abraham as he expounds the gospel to him in advance.

That's what Paul says God is doing with Abraham as he does that in both word and sign in that visible sign of this covenant ceremony. First of all God reminds Abraham of the authority of his presence.

In verse 1 and in verse 8 both they draw attention don't they to focus on God's personal presence with Abraham and all that that means for him. I am your shield. That's why your reward must be very great.

[ 16 : 49 ] The NIV translates it this way I am your shield and your very great reward. And either way the point is this that it's because of who God is and what kind of God he is that Abraham can be assured of the wonderful things from him that he's promised and wonderful things with him.

It's the same in verse 7 you see he says I am the Lord who brought you out of that pagan past and brought you into a future blessing.

Remember what kind of God I am. That's what God is saying to Abraham. Don't forget I'm the kind of God whose very being speaks of joy and of deliverance and of new life and of blessing and of generosity.

And just to have me as your God means that all that I am is inevitably going to spill over and bless you just because you're with me. Can't be otherwise.

He is the great rewarder. That's his nature. And just to know him and just to travel with him guarantees authoritatively that great reward to you.

[ 17 : 59 ] It's a little bit like if you're going on a family outing with the whole extended family and the kids will always say I want to go in granny's car. Isn't that right? Why do they say that? Well because granny's the great rewarder.

Just to be in granny's car is to be in the place where you're going to get great rewards. Not like your measly parents never give you anything. It's true isn't it granny? You're a terrible bane to our lives as parents.

But don't stop. But you see that's what God's saying to Abraham. I'm the great rewarder just to be with me. Just to be in the place of the rewards. And Abraham knew that that had been true for him.

And Moses people remember this is who Moses is writing for they knew it too. I am the Lord who brought you out also. That was what he kept saying to them wasn't it? He brought them to blessings of streams in the desert and the manna and the quail and the miracles and all of these things.

Don't forget what kind of God I really am. Don't forget what blessings just flow from the very authority of my presence. A bountiful provision and a bountiful protection.

[ 19 : 07 ] I am your shield. I myself he says am your safety. And just to be with me is to be safe. Now little children know that too don't they?

Wake up in the night with a bad dream pad through open the door climb into mum and dad's bed and just curl up and go to sleep. Nothing's changed but they just know that that's the place where they're safe isn't it?

And you see we fear as Christian believers so often I think because we forget what kind of God we know and we love. We forget what God is really like and we substitute all kinds of false understandings of our own imagination of what God is like.

We forget the authoritative blessing that simply cascades and overflows just from being in his presence. He is the rewarder of those who seek him says Hebrews 11 verse 6.

And sometimes friends we fear and we doubt just because we fear and doubt that. We doubt that God really is our rewarder. And that's why sometimes our Christian lives are a pale shadow of what they could be.

[ 20 : 19 ] Think of that man in the parable that Jesus told the one talent man who went and hid his talent in the ground. Why? Because I knew that you were a hard man. Well whatever gave him that idea?

The other two servants had no such idea. He was a master whose great delight was to call his servants in and say come and enter the joy of your master's house. He wasn't like that at all. That man's life was blighted because he totally forgot the sheer joy of the presence of God himself what he really is like.

And if that's you you need God's word to Abraham here. You need Jesus' words. How much more will your father in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

Don't forget what kind of God we really have. And don't forget the authority that comes just from his presence to provide and to protect us. The second thing God reminds Abraham of is the scope of his promise.

If you look at verses 4 and 5 you'll see he promises him an heir yes from his very own body and offspring as vast as the stars of heaven. Innumerable.

[ 21 : 37 ] And then down in verse 18 at the end there. And following. He promises him a land of vast proportions. Far greater proportions actually than the Israelites ever in fact possessed throughout all their history.

For a brief moment in the height of David's empire then politically yes they did extend their control as far as the Euphrates but never in possession. You see what God's saying.

He's saying to Abraham don't forget how big my plan and my purpose is. Don't forget that what I'm doing and what I've called you to be part of is my plan for the salvation of this whole universe.

This is about a journey back to Eden. This is about my promise going all the way back to then. It's my promise to reverse the curse through the offspring the seed who is to come.

This is the reversal of all the great curses. The curse of Babel. This is going to bring together all nations again in the blessing that will be your true offspring forever.

[ 22 : 41 ] That's what you're a part of Abraham. Something huge and vast in the plan of God. Now we may not know exactly how much Abraham grasped of all the details of exactly how God's plan was going to come to fulfillment but we do need to remember Jesus' words don't we?

In John chapter 8 Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad we're told. If you take that seriously if you take Hebrews chapter 11 seriously it seems that Abraham knew an awful lot more than we usually give him credit for.

But whatever the detail of that might be this much is plain. In this encounter God is setting Abraham's personal story and his life and his lifetime into the big picture of God's story.

The story of his promise coming to its ultimate fulfillment in the glory of Christ who is to come in the climax of his kingdom. He's stretching his mind to see how big God's work really is.

And that's so important for us. Because you know you will never understand your own life. You'll never understand your own story unless we're made to understand that it's part of that great story.

[ 23 : 56 ] We begin to see how we fit into something so much greater. Something that begins in eternity and ends in eternity. See you and I we can only see the present can't we?

We can see and understand a little bit about the past but we don't know the future. None of us know what's going to happen to us in a week's time. It's hard isn't it?

It's hard. But you see when we remember the big story of what God is doing through Abraham's promised offspring well then we remember don't we that whatever our present struggles, our questions, we're part of something wonderful.

We're part of something eternal. And all things do indeed work together for the good of those who love God. And God can be relied on in this.

Well can he? Well look at the vastness of the starry sky God says to Abraham. And remember that that's just a footnote in God's creation story.

[ 24 : 58 ] Do you remember Genesis chapter 1? He also made the stars. Almost left out as being of no significance. But he has promised a people without number to be his own.

And a vast land indeed a vast new creation. And that's what our lives are part of. We feel so small, so insignificant but God is calling us to see how big and how wonderful.

He is and His plan is and just what we're part of. And we fear because we forget that. Isn't that right? But oh Lord God, how am I to know?

Maybe we find ourselves saying the same thing as Abraham. Well look at the third thing that God reveals to Abraham here. The depth of his pledge. And that's what this strange ceremony in verses 9 to 12 is all about.

It's a public act of commitment on oath. It's a binding agreement of a covenant between two parties. Verse 18 tells us that plainly. God made a covenant with Abraham about the offspring and about the land.

[ 26 : 10 ] It's a strange ceremony to us. We would go to a lawyer's office and get them to draw up a contract and seal it and all of that sort of thing. But in Abraham's culture the common thing in the day was to make a covenant.

It was very familiar also of course to the Israelites, wasn't it? Who Moses is writing to. Don't forget they were the covenant people. They knew all about God's covenant. He made a covenant with them after all at Sinai, hadn't he?

And Moses was constantly reminding his people not to forget the covenant of God. And he was constantly reassuring his people, wasn't he, that God would never forget his covenant to them. All the way through the book of Deuteronomy, words like this, For the Lord your God is a merciful God.

He will not leave you, nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them. Deuteronomy 4 verse 31. Why? Why would he never forget?

Because it was a bond sealed in blood, sovereignly put in place by the Lord God himself. And the symbolism of this ritual speaks of the depth of God's commitment to the promise that he has pledged to Abraham.

[ 27 : 21 ] The cut up animals on either side signify the covenant curse, the penalty for breaking the covenant, death of the party concerned. Normally, in making a covenant, both parties would walk through the pieces and make it binding upon themselves.

But I guess you see there in verse 17, it's God alone who passes through the pieces this time. God appears in the fire and the smoke. So familiar, of course, to Moses readers, as signifying God's presence on the mountain and in the pillar of cloud and fire.

And God himself comes and sovereignly commits himself to Abraham by this extraordinary blood oath. Hebrews 6 says, he swore by himself on his own life.

How am I to know that you will be true to your promise, says Abraham? Abraham? Because I pledge myself even to the death that it will be so.

That's God's answer. That's the depth of God's pledge to Abraham and to all his heirs. God's death may be the price. His blood may be required, be it so, says God.

[ 28 : 35 ] But this promise shall not fall. Well, the Israelites of all people knew how much God had taken upon himself to suffer for their sake in order to keep his covenant promises with them.

He hadn't abandoned them even though they had often abandoned him. Instead, he himself had joined them enduring exile in the wilderness with them, being patient, being gracious.

Think of it, the God of all the earth humbled and living in the desert in a tent so that his promise might be proved true. Extraordinary, isn't it?

But how much more for you and me today? Do you doubt sometimes that you will ever really possess what God has promised you in Christ Jesus? The place of blessing that he's called you to?

Do you sometimes doubt that he who promised is really faithful? Well, remember the depth of his pledge. And as Abraham looked forward on the strength of that pledge, we look back, don't we, to that pledge made good.

[ 29 : 46 ] Isn't that right? And it did cost God's blood. It was indeed a covenant sealed in blood, just as God said, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament does tell us, doesn't it, that that's the only way we do enter the holy place of God's dwelling, through the blood of Jesus, through the way open to us by his flesh. And that's why Hebrews 10 goes on to say, we can draw near in full assurance of faith.

And hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. He kept his pledge, the depth of his pledge. And we're standing on that promise still.

And that's why Paul says, and he who spared his own son, spared not his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

All that he's promised. But fourth, notice the shape of God's pattern in the promise that he reveals to Abraham.

[ 30 : 59 ] You see, verses 13 to 16 are very revealing, aren't they? There's no false assurance in what God says to Abraham. There's no cheap grace here. No, God is very honest.

His plan is going to take a long, long time to fulfill. He's going to cause his people to have an awful lot of waiting. And affliction, verse 13, a long time of affliction.

There will be much affliction, much to be endured, much to be suffered before at last there will be glorious victory and reward. Why so long? Well, ultimately, I suppose it's a mystery, isn't it?

It's God's good time. But one thing we are told here plainly is that God is astonishingly patient with sinful and wicked human beings. He's slow to judge.



He'll only dispossess these native Canaanite peoples, the Amorites, in verse 16. The Amorites really stands as a summary for all of the ten peoples mentioned in the last couple of verses.

[ 32 : 04 ] He'll only dispossess them when there is no doubt whatsoever that their wickedness has become so vast and so complete as to be beyond any hope of anything other than just judgment and punishment.

Not before. But notice the pattern. Because of God's slowness to judge, because of God's desire to save and to bless, his people must suffer and endure days of darkness and pain and affliction.

They must pass through pain and many tribulations before they enter their promised kingdom just because they are the people of a God who is slow to anger and abiding in mercy. God's pattern shapes their pattern.

A pattern we know, isn't it? A pattern of God himself, a pattern that's most gloriously revealed and fulfilled in his seed, in his Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his suffering and death, in his glorious resurrection because only in that great fulfillment on the cross can God be truly vindicated and proved to be just and also the justifier of the ungodly.

And you see that even as God is revealing that pattern of a future to Abraham here for God's chosen people, his kingdom of priests, his Israel who will manifest the true character of God to the world, even as God reveals that to Abraham, he shows Abraham that he too, personally is going to experience that pattern in his own life.

[ 33 : 52 ] Even in what goes on here in verse 11, he has to wait for God to come and fulfill his covenant oath. He waits all day long until nightfall fighting off these birds of prey and surely that seems to be significant of battling against enemies and so on.

And likewise in verse 12, Abraham himself personally feels it intensely, a dreadful darkness, a great darkness comes upon his spirit, signifying everything that this covenant is really going to mean.

Somehow you see God was showing him that that pattern was what explained his life too. That he too somehow mysteriously shares in the experience of the Christ who is to come.

Because he too was playing his part in God's eternal plan and purpose. And the New Testament tells us plainly, doesn't it, that so it is for all who are truly of Abraham, who are in Christ.

It's the unmistakable mark, isn't it, of the New Testament believer. Not, not that they should be free from struggle and afflictions in this present age. No. But rather that their lives, that our lives, you and me, if we truly are heirs of Abraham in Christ, our lives will be marked by this pattern.

[ 35 : 15 ] By struggles, by groaning, by waiting with patience, by enduring hardship. That's the gospel pattern. That's the real faith that the apostles spoke about, saying through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

And that's the pattern of true faith and true faithfulness with God because it's shaped by the pattern of God himself. our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's why your life is as it is.

If you serve Jesus, Paul says to the Philippians, it's been granted to you not only that you should believe in him, but also that you should suffer for his sake. And for the sake of our part in the privilege of bringing the message of that great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his covenant mercy to this world.

God's sake of God. That's the true gospel of God. Here it is, preached in advance to Abraham, but it's the same eternal, unchanging gospel of God, whose presence overflows with provision and protection that we need, whose promises of our salvation, vast as eternity, pledged immutably in the blood of God himself, and whose pattern will be played out in the life of every single believer, every true heir to Abraham, the man of faith.

Abraham, you see, remonstrated with God. He needed God's assurance, because his experience didn't seem to him to fit the idea that he had of what God had promised him. And so God revealed more of the truth to Abraham about his covenant plan and purpose, about his gospel.

[ 37 : 00 ] And that was the means of Abraham's assurance. Helped it to be real, to buttress his faith. What was the result?

Well, finally, in verse six, we see Abraham's response to God, don't we? He believed the Lord. Maybe better, he trusted him. The root of that word means to stand firm, so we could translate it like this.

Abraham stood firm on God's promises, as he was fortified by those promises and by the pledge of God's covenant. Not that this was a sudden or momentary thing for Abraham, as though he suddenly made a decision for God.

That's not how the New Testament paints it at all. If you read Paul and James and the book of Hebrews, when they crook these words about Abraham in verse six, they apply it to every part of Abraham's life, right from the very beginning.

Hebrews 11 says, by faith he obeyed and went, right to the very end, the offering up of Isaac, his offspring. Not some kind of easy believism that's being described here.

[ 38 : 07 ] No, it's exactly the opposite of that. Abraham believed God means Abraham believed and kept on believing. He stood firm. He stayed firm. He trusted God through all his fears and all his struggles.

It's best summed up in the words in Hebrews 6 verse 13. Listen. For when God made a promise to Abraham, he swore by himself, saying surely I will bless you and multiply you.

And thus, Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. Why? Not because he was perfect.

He was far from it. We've seen that already in his story. We'll see it again. Not because he deserved it. But rather, as verse six says, God counted it to him as righteousness.

That is, God declared Abraham to be right with him. To be his friend, as the Bible puts it later on. Just because he believed God to be who he said he was.

[ 39 : 15 ] The rewarder of those who seek him. And he stood firm, trusting in him that he who had begun a good work in him would surely bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ.

To borrow Paul's words. Jesus Christ. Friends, it can be very hard to trust God. You know that and I know that.

It's because we're human beings and we're weak. And we fear because life is tough and God often moves in mysterious ways. Ways very mysterious for us and for some of us here this morning that might mean many struggles in our lives.

Maybe at this very moment struggling with some particular sin. Struggling with issues of ill health. Struggling with the pain and the loss of bereavement.

But be in no doubt. God is performing wonders. And you can trust his promises.

[ 40 : 21 ] They're pledged. They're pledged in his own blood. So fear not. Trust God. Wait patiently.

And like Abraham, you also shall obtain the promise. Amen. Let's pray. Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

And the words that was counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but also for ours. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus.

For in this hope we were saved. If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Lord, help us in our many fears and doubts. Help us in our remonstrations and questions to you.

[ 41 : 31 ] Help us to come to you in faith as Abraham did and willing to receive your great revelation that alone can strengthen us and help us and keep us to the end.

help us to keep trusting in your great promises that keep us until the end.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to end by singing number 779, a great hymn of faith and trust. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. Number 779. wir dimm actual in forgiveness.

we're going to end by snoe lutwe. here and we're going to end by here and with invisible Amen.

[ 43 : 14 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. His oath, his covenant, and his blood support me in the rising flood.

Amen. Amen.