

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

**“Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield,
your very great reward.”**

² But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (NIV84)

Theme: Made Righteous through faith.

1. Abraham’s faith in God’s promise was credited as righteousness.
2. Our faith in Jesus’ resurrection is credited as righteousness.

Have you ever been told something that sounded too good to be true. Someone calls and says you one a free vacation—an all expenses paid trip to the Bahamas. It’s too good to be true. The whole thought of it is ridiculous. Why would anyone simply give you a free trip? So you’re not going to believe him

But what if it turns out to be true? Then you miss out. Which wouldn’t be all that big of a deal if it was something like a trip. But many reject the free trip to heaven that Christ offers to all through his resurrection. And so they miss out on eternal life. But we are made righteous through faith. This is the case for Abraham’s faith in God’s promise and our faith in Jesus’ resurrection.

Abraham, then known as Abram was 75 years old when God told him to leave his home land and travel the country he would show him. God brought him to the Land of Canaan. There he gave Abraham a three-fold promise. Even though he had no children and he and his

wife were well beyond child bearing years, God promised that he would have a child. In fact that child would grow up to become a great nation. This nation would also live in the land of Canaan. That was the second part of the promise.

The third part of the promise was the most important. **All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.** All nations on earth would be blessed through Abraham because through Abraham the Savior of the world would be born! Not only would Abraham have a child in his old age, but that child would have many descendants. And somewhere down the line, one of Abraham’s descendants would be the Promised Messiah—the one who would save the world from their sins. God graciously chose Abraham through whom to send his Son.

But all this hinged on Abraham having a child. And that seemed impossible. He was already 75 years old. His wife, Sarah, was 65 years old. Both, well beyond the normal years of having a child. Nevertheless Abraham believed that God’s three-fold promise to him would come true. But he probably figured that it would happen soon. And if didn’t happen soon, it would be too late. For he and Sarah weren’t getting any younger.

So they waited and waited. But nothing happened. Years passed by with no new of pregnancy. Abraham began to wonder if God’s promise would come true. God had blessed him with many things—including great wealth. But the only thing that Abraham wanted was a child.

So once when God came to Abraham, Abraham complained a little. **What can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus... You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.** Abraham wanted a child, but he was having his doubts whether or not God would fulfill his promise. It had been a long time and he was still waiting and he wasn’t getting any younger.

We too may have doubts from time to time. We know God’s Word. We understand what it says. But we still can’t help but wonder from time to time. Is it true? Or is it all one big lie? There are certain things that cause us to question God’s Word. Evolution contradicts the truth that the Bible teaches about God creating the world in six days.

Modern society tells us that God is wrong about homosexuality. That the Bible's teachings on living outside of marriage no longer apply for today—an old teaching for an old time from an old book. If God was wrong about these things, or lied about them, what about the rest of his word? All of his Word, then, is called into question.

If God lied about these things what else did he lie about? If the Bible is wrong about how the world was created, is it wrong on who created the world? What about who saved the world? What if Jesus didn't really exist? Or what if he was just a regular guy—a good guy, but his story was embellished through the years? What if he didn't really save us—that he really didn't rise from the dead. Does that mean there is no such thing as an afterlife and this life is all there is? So we begin to question whether or not we are saved. We wonder if the Bible is most elaborately written fable of all time.

Abraham too had his doubts. How could that three-fold promise come true if he had no son—a servant of his was even set to be his heir? So God reiterated his promise. **“This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”** Through modern science we can say that there are over 8000 skies visible in the middle eastern sky. But the exact number isn't important. In fact, the exact number is the exact opposite of what God intended. The point is that there are numerous stars in the sky—too numerous to count. Abraham would have many descendants—countless. They would be too numerous to count.

This seemed almost too good to be true. He was old. So was he wife. She wasn't pregnant yet. It seemed as if time was running out. But instead of doubting, Abraham believed. And about this faith we read, **Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.** It was Abraham's faith through which he was saved. Not by anything he had done, rather through the faith he was given, he was considered holy and righteous in God's sight. No longer a sinner in God's eyes, but his own dear child. Abraham knew that through this promise being fulfilled all others would follow—including the promise of a Savior through his line. So Abraham's faith in the fulfillment of this promise was also faith in the Promised Savior.

Abraham was declared righteous through his faith in the promise. It is through faith in the Risen Savior, that we too are considered righteous in God's sight.

Eventually God would keep his promise to Abraham. When Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 she gave birth to a boy named Isaac. Some Isaac's descendants became known as the Israelites. Year's later the Jews lived in the Promised Land of Canaan—a land we often refer to as Israel. And Jesus was the fulfillment of the last part of the promise. Through him, one of Abraham's descendants, all nations on earth are truly blessed. For it was for all nations that Jesus came down to this earth. It was for the sake of all our sins that he suffered and died on the cross. Through him the sins of the world have been paid for. For the world Jesus suffered through the pain and agony of hell.

And for the sake of the world Jesus rose from the dead. We celebrated his joyous victory over death last week. And we bask in that victory every day. For he gives his victory to us. Through him we have defeated sin, death, and the devil. Through his resurrection we have eternal life. Our dead bodies will be given life. And all believers will live with Jesus forever in heaven.

But there are those who doubt. The Jews doubted that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They didn't believe that Jesus was Abraham's seed through which all people would be blessed. They saw Jesus as a rebellious blasphemer. Others saw him simply as a miracle worker. He was one who knew God's Word well and taught with authority, but he certainly wasn't the Christ. They doubted so they rejected him. And they sent him to his death.

The disciples doubted too, but in a different way. We see in our gospel for today that during that first Easter night 10 of the disciples were hiding behind locked doors. Despite all the reports they still had their doubts as to if Jesus actually did rise from the dead. When Jesus appeared to them they thought they were looking at a ghost. But they saw him, heard, and touched him they knew and believed that he had truly risen from the dead. But Thomas wasn't there—for whatever reason he was gone. But when they saw Thomas, the disciples told him that they had seen the Lord. But Thomas doubted. So a week later Jesus appeared to them again—this time when Thomas was

present. Thomas knew and believed. And he confessed and said to Jesus, **My Lord and my God!**

Seeing was believing for Thomas. He doubted the truth of the resurrection—it was too good to be true. But when he saw the Lord he believed. And he confessed his faith. Abraham didn't see God. But he heard God's voice. And God promised him that he would be the Father of many nations. And God's Word was enough.

None of us has seen God. We have never laid our eyes on the Risen Savior. God has not appeared to us in a vision. We have never heard his voice. For us seeing or hearing is not believing. And yet we believe. Because the Holy Spirit has led us to faith through the gospel. For it the gospel is his Word. As we read in the second lesson, **Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** The Bible is just as good as seeing Jesus or hearing God's voice, for it is written by eye witnesses of Jesus' work through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What we have is even better. **We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it.** We have seen the fulfillment of all these prophecies, so we are better off than those who have gone before us, for we have clearly seen their fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

And it is through this gospel that the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to faith. Our faith is solely the work of the Holy Spirit. It is believing in Jesus as the Savior of the world and the giver of eternal life. And this is not a conscious decision we have made. If faith depended on us making a decision for Christ, then we wouldn't be Christian. For we would never choose to believe in and follow something that is so contrary to our reason. The Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing us to faith. And he does this through his Word—the Bible.

And it is through this faith that we are considered righteous. No longer sinners in God's eyes, but his own dear children. Righteous through faith. Like Thomas. And like Abraham. A point Paul makes in Romans one. **For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."**

There are some things that sound too good to be true. Receiving a free trip. Having a child at 100 years old, for example. Or someone rising from the dead. Many claim that's too good to be true, so they reject it. And without faith they don't receive the blessings he has won for us. But Christ lives and so will we. For the righteous live by faith. Amen.