

“Never-Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever, Super Glue™ Love”

Genesis 15:7-21

10 March 2024

GOD SUPERGLUES HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE.

That’s what Genesis 15 is all about. What is known as the “Abrahamic Covenant” is all about God supergluing Himself to His people. His covenant sticks. His commitment to His people sticks. His promises stick. Like *Super Glue™*. And, that might be enough truth about Jesus to keep you afloat today. That might be enough truth to make your fickle heart dance.

Okay. Genesis 15. We left off last week with verse 6. We were eavesdropping on a vision/conversation between Abram and Yahweh, the Sovereign Lord, that continues in verse 7. So, let’s look at God’s word and see just how committed God is to His people. Just a warning here, in case you’re one of the peoples who advocate for the ethical treatment of animals. You won’t like this passage ‘cause God is going to tell Abram to sharpen his knife and start cutting up some farm animals. We’ll read the whole account and then cut it up, pun intended, and look at each section.

LOOK AT VERSE 7...

And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

So, we have 2 divine encounters here. God meets with Abram twice. The first, we saw last week, was at night as a vision and it pertained to *the seed*, or descendants, of Abram. The second one, that we will look at today, happens at sunset, where Abram is partially in a deep sleep, and it pertains to *the land* promised to Abram.

Well, no surprise either when you pick up the conversation, ‘cause here we are again. Abram has just received the promise from the Lord that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars. He looked up at the night sky and believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness (v.6). But, then comes verse seven. Abram needs more assurance. There’s always a verse seven in our life. We always need more reassurance. We always need a verse 7 from God ‘cause we really are prone to wander, anxiety, fear, doubt, etc.

Abram was just reassured of God’s promise in verse 5. And, he believed, but he still has questions. How will he know that he’ll have land and possess it? So, Yahweh comes again in verse seven to reiterate the promise, and to rub it into Abram’s pores. But, this time Yahweh goes even deeper. He makes a *covenant* with Abram, and that changes everything.

So, the Lord comes and reaffirms that He’s going to give the land to Abram, then Abram asks the question, *“How will I know that I possess it?”* As I mentioned last week, I love that the Lord allows this kind of dialogue. Here’s the promise from Yahweh: *I’m gonna give you the land*. Then, here’s the question from Abram: *How do I know I’ll possess it?*

And, it’s not that Abram is full of doubt here. He’s not. He’s not doubting ‘cause he just believed! So, don’t see this as doubt. Abram just wants to know *how*. He just wants to know *how* he’s going to get the land, because there are already people living there. Is Yahweh going to be his realtor? Is Yahweh going to broker a deal with the Amorites, the Jebusites, and all the other -ites! How am I going to possess the land when there’s all these other people living there?

Abram just wants to know *how*. How was this going to be? How is it going to go down? Again, this is another reminder that you can ask God questions. It’s okay to ask God, *“How are you going to do this? How are you going to bring good out of this messy situation?”* That’s all Abram is doing here.

And, Yahweh ends up telling Abram exactly *how* it's gonna happen.

LOOK AT VERSE 8...

But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.

So, the Lord tells Abram to go get 5 animals from the barn and to cut them in half. What's that all about? Well, apparently Abram knew because he went and did just that! So, Abram gets these 5 animals and cuts them all in half. There's a note that says that, "...he did not cut the birds in half." Most likely what Abram did was just sever the head from the body of the birds. He just ripped the head off the 2 birds, he didn't cut them in half.

But, notice that Abram doesn't ask Yahweh a question here. He doesn't say, "Why do you want me to cut up animals?" He doesn't say, "Why do you want me to rip the birds' heads off?" He doesn't say, "Why do you want me to lay them out like this?" Abram knew what was happening here and what was happening was this: Yahweh was making a covenant with Abraham.

What does *covenant* mean? Alec Motyer says, "The 'covenant' idea in the Old Testament can be very simply summarized in the statement, 'God makes and keeps promises.'"

God is making a promise to Abram here. God is making a covenant, formally "sealing the deal" with Abram. This is a solemn promise in oath. This is like kids on a playground pinky swearing to something, but obviously it's so much deeper. God is formally committing himself to Abram through Covenant.

And, that's really the heart of the text. As I mentioned last week, this is the heart of God. Obviously, God knows He's going to keep His promise to Abram. Obviously, God knows that He's formally committed Himself to Abram. So, why this weird, bloody, covenant ritual? Does God get anything out of this? No. Does God need to be reminded that He has to be faithful to His promises? No.

Yahweh initiates this physical covenant procedure and ritual for the sake of Abram, to reassure him. To remind him that Yahweh will be faithful to His promises. God is going out of His way with a very bloody ritual, *so that* Abram can be reassured that Yahweh will be faithful to His promises. This is nothing less than the heart of God here, reassuring Abraham.

God knows that Abram is going to struggle with his faith. God knows that Abram is going to be full of doubt, fear, worry, anxiety. So, what does God do? He gives Abram a very vivid reminder that He will be faithful to His promises.

LOOK AT VERSE 12...

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

As the sun sets, a deep sleep overtakes Abram, and Yahweh tells him that his offspring will be slaves in a foreign land, and they will suffer for 400 years, and they will not return to Canaan until 400 years have passed. But, God will bring judgment down on the nation that has enslaved them. If you know your Bible, obviously, the Lord is speaking about the Israelites being slaves in Egypt for 400 years.

God is telling Abram that his descendants will have to wait for 400 years before they are delivered. Why? Why 400 years? Well, Yahweh beats Abram to the punch, and before he can ask Yahweh another question, before he can ask, "Why 400 years, Lord?" Yahweh tells him: *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*

Well, what's that about? Abram must have been very sleepy 'cause this would be a great question to ask God: *What do you mean "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete"?* Abe doesn't ask it, Yahweh doesn't explain it, but commentaries and study Bibles do! And, here's the gist of what they all say it means:

First, the name "Amorites" is catch-all name for all the pagan nations that live in Canaan. Second, God is waiting until the nations become totally saturated in their sin before He comes in judgment. Yes, Yahweh will bring judgment on the pagan cities and nations, as He did with the Flood, and the Tower of Babel, and as he'll do with Sodom and Gomorrah. But, God waits.

Did you hear that? *God waits*. That's an incredible 2 word sentence right there. God waits for people to repent. God gives people time to change their mind, change their ways. How merciful! How gracious!

So, don't rush past this and get all worked up over God bringing judgment down on sinners. Some people are offended by this. But, they miss the fact that God waits 400 YEARS to bring judgment! He is patient! He is merciful! He waits and waits and waits and waits to see if people would repent, to give them time to repent. As I said last week, and earlier in this sermon, this is the heart of God in display in Genesis 15. God waits. God is willing to give these pagan nations 400 years to repent, which I think we can all agree is *very generous* on God's part, right?

But, if they refuse to turn to God, then He brings judgment. I know that's not politically correct. I know saying that will get me canceled. So, what? This is what God's word says! You may think it unfair that God judges sin. But, that's not true. It's not about equality or fairness. It's about what's right. It's about justice. Let me share something that I heard R.C. Sproul say-

"The biblical doctrine of election teaches that some people receive grace, the rest receive justice. No one ever receives injustice from God."

God saves some people, and that is *grace*. Others, receive *justice*. They receive the *just* penalty for their sins. They don't receive *injustice*. They receive what they justly deserve. You don't actually want what's fair. You don't want fairness 'cause then nobody receives grace. What's "fair" is that we all die in our sins and suffer eternally. It's not an injustice to be judged for your sin and rebellion. God is not unjust. No one ever receives injustice from God. They either receive grace or justice.

So, God waits 400 years for these nations to repent. That in itself is a *mercy*. But, these nations don't repent, and once their sins are complete and "filled up," then God brings justice.

Maybe you haven't placed your faith in Jesus yet. Maybe you haven't turned from living for yourself. Why not do that right now? Just cry out to the Lord. Look to Jesus and be saved from the just penalty of your sin. And, if you do, then you'll soon discover this wonderful truth-

GOD SUPERGLUES HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE.

Look to Jesus, trusting in His life and death, and He will superglue Himself to you forever! That's what His love is like. It has super-glue on it. Ralph Davis says, *"It is love, but love with an 'umph.' I have sometimes called it love with super glue on it. It's Yahweh's love that simply won't let go."*

And, that love would not let Abram go because it was about to go between those 10 pieces of dead animals.

LOOK AT VERSE 17...

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

This is where we really get into the meat of this covenant ritual, pun intended, of course. The smoking fire pot and the flaming torch that pass between the 10 pieces of animals represents the Lord. This is God Himself walking between these animals. Okay. But, why, and what does it mean?

Well, this was how you ratified a covenant in the ancient Near East. We might formalize something with a handshake, or signing a contract, or a good ole fashioned "pinky swear, and that's exactly what this weird bloody ritual is. In the ancient Near East this is how you "signed" on the dotted line. This is how you entered into a contract.

Let me explain further. In this covenant ritual, both parties would walk between the pieces of dead animals and by doing so, they were both saying, *"If I break this covenant, if go back on my word, then may what happened to these animals happen to me. May I be cut into pieces if I break my end of the deal."*

And, that's why the Hebrew word (*karat*) used here for "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram" means literally "to cut a covenant." You "cut" a covenant because you "cut" these animals up and said that if you broke the covenant, then you should be "cut" into pieces like these animals. Pretty serious stuff, right?

We see an example of this in Jeremiah 34 when some men went back on a covenant that they had entered into. The Babylonians were fighting against Jerusalem, so some Israelites gave their slaves their freedom and did so by entering into one of these bloody covenants. But, when the Babylonians pulled back a bit, these Israelites tried to re-slave their slaves. They broke the covenant that they made. So, here's how God responds-

Jeremiah 34:18-20

And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.

So, this was how you formalized a covenant in the ancient Near East. And, you can read about it in other cultures at the time as well. In this ritual, you were invoking a curse upon yourself, if you broke it. And, that's what Yahweh is doing here in Genesis 15. Notice that Abram is sleepy, he doesn't walk through the pieces. Only Yahweh does. So, it's only the Lord who, by walking through the pieces, is saying, *"If I break this covenant, if go back on my word, then may what happened to these animals happen to me. May I be cut into pieces if I break my end of the deal."*

This is how committed Jesus is to His people. Think about that. God would rather destroy Himself than turn His back on His people. He would rather destroy Himself than prove to be unfaithful. Yahweh is telling Abram that He will keep His word and Abram and his descendants will inherit the land. The nations that are currently living in Canaan will be kicked out in time. God is going to throw all their belongings out into the street. Yahweh is going to walk into the Promised Land and remove these nations.

And, we see this with the 5 animals. Remember, they were cut in two. So, you have 10 pieces of animals. And, how many nations are listed in verse 19-21? Ten! Ten nations will be uprooted, and they are represented by the 10 pieces of animals! Yahweh is going to walk before Abram and Co. into the land. And we see this in Exodus 33:2 when the Lord says that He will send an angel to go before Moses and Co. to drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, and all the other -ites. All proof that God makes and keeps promises.

Understand this: This isn't some bland, sterile, boring, just-sign-on-the-dotted-line business deal. This is not some plain, vanilla contract that has no emotion behind it. This is the heart of God. This is God in all his attributes, the full force of who He is, in His white hot glory, His power, His wisdom, His eminence, His transcendence coming together, and super-gluing himself to Abram and his descendants, which now includes you and me.

Please don't view Genesis 15 as some boring contract, like you're buying a house and have to sign your name 100 times. This is God Himself invoking a curse upon Himself, should He break this covenant, should He break His commitment, should He break His promises to His people. This is none other than the heart of God for His people, the heart of God for you. You need to personalize Genesis chapter 15. This is about you, too. Because you are one of Abrahams descendants.

When God shakes hands, he doesn't spit in His hand and shake like 2 boys on a playground. He pours in superglue. Then He shakes your hand. And, then you are super-glued to Him forever.

So, you can't break God's "forever" that is encapsulated in His promises. God's promise will endure any casualties that might threaten it. No "birds of prey," no nations, not even you going rogue, not even your unfaithfulness, no *anything* can kill God's promises to His people.

And, this is why God never tires of reassuring His people. You see that with Abram's 2 questions and how Yahweh responds. *"Let me burn it into your memory, Abe. Kill and cut animals. Get blood all over you. I'll walk through it and self-impose a curse if I turn on you."* You have to love a God who never tires of reassuring His weak, small faith people! You just gotta love that you serve a God like that! Not one that deals in "Shame on you!" But "Let me assure you!"

This is how committed Jesus is to His people. Think about that. He would rather destroy Himself than turn His back on His people. He would rather destroy Himself than prove to be unfaithful. He'll go to death, if need be. And He did. On the cross.

That's what Genesis 15 is all about. It's about God's commitment to His people and His promises. Oh, sure. There's 5 animals that get cut up, and God walks through the bloody pieces. It's all a little weird for us, although it wasn't for Abram. This was common covenant stuff. So, we read it and it's kinda odd, but if we can get past the blood and the decapitated birds and the ram being cut in half, we'll actually discover the very heart of God. We'll discover His tenacious commitment to His people.

And, if you can see that, then you know you're just a short hop and a skip to Calvary, right? If you walk through the pieces of animals in Genesis 15, it'll lead you straight to the cross, which if you're a savvy Bible-reader, you know Genesis 15 is setting you up for.

At the cross, God Himself did take the curse upon Himself. Jesus bore our sins and died in our place. Listen again

to these beautiful words:

Galatians 3:13-14

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Wow. Those words ought to make you hop and skip around like little kids! Don't do it if your knees are bad, but that's an appropriate response to these verses. The blessing of Abraham has come upon us. We have the Spirit. Jesus bore our curse. We are free. That should make us want to hop and skip out of church today.

And, that's the kind of good news that might make you let your kids get dessert at lunch today. And, that would be an appropriate thing to do. Let your kids get dessert, or get a Coke, and then tell them you're doing it to celebrate what Jesus has done for you. Maybe even tell the waiter when they ask, "Any dessert?" You say, "Yes! We're celebrating that God cannot love us anymore than He already does and He'll never love us any less, and that's a big deal because we're pretty big sinners. We're celebrating that-

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God does it all. He alone walked through the animals. He alone makes and keeps promises. It's all about Him. It's about Jesus and what He has done in taking the curse upon Himself on the cross. It's not about us doing more, trying harder, pedaling faster. It's about Him.

Here's what Sally Lloyd-Jones said about writing *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. She said-

That's why I wrote The Jesus Storybook Bible. So children could know what I didn't: that the Bible isn't mainly about me and what I should be doing. It's about God and what he has done. That the Bible is largely, though not only, a great story — the greatest story of all, the story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. That — in spite of everything, no matter what, whatever it cost him — God won't ever stop loving his children... with a wonderful, never-stopping, never-giving-up, unbreaking, always-and-forever love. That the Bible, in short, has a marvelous, coherent storyline — it's not just a collection of rules — and that there is only one Hero in the story. I wrote so children could meet the Hero in its pages. And become part of his magnificent story. Because rules don't change you. But a story — God's story, by the power of his Spirit — can.

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Sermon Study Questions

1. READ Genesis 15:6-8. Explain how Abram "believed" God's promise in verse 6 and then 3 verses later asked God "how" it would come about. Was this doubt? Or, was this just "inquisitive" faith?

2. Discuss this quote from the sermon:

Did you hear that? God waits. That's an incredible 2-word sentence right there. God waits for people to repent. God gives people time to change their mind, change their ways. How merciful! How gracious!

So, don't rush past this and get all worked up over God bringing judgment down on sinners. Some people are offended by this. But, they miss the fact that God waits 400 YEARS to bring judgment! He is patient! He is merciful! He waits and waits and waits and waits to see if people would repent, to give them time to repent. As I said last week, and earlier in this sermon, this is the heart of God in display in Genesis 15. God waits. God is willing to give these pagan nations 400 years to repent, which I think we can all agree is very generous on God's part, right?

3. READ Genesis 15:17. Why doesn't Abram pass through the animals? Why is it only Yahweh and what does this teach us about God?

4. Discuss what R.C. Sproul said: "The biblical doctrine of election teaches that some people receive grace, the rest receive justice. No one ever receives injustice from God."

5. Discuss these quotes:

Alec Motyer

"The 'covenant' idea in the Old Testament can be very simply summarized in the statement, 'God makes and keeps promises.'"

Sally Lloyd-Jones

That's why I wrote The Jesus Storybook Bible. So children could know what I didn't: that the Bible isn't mainly about me and what I should be doing. It's about God and what he has done. That the Bible is largely, though not only, a great story — the greatest story of all, the story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. That — in spite of everything, no matter what, whatever it cost him — God won't ever stop loving his children... with a wonderful, never-stopping, never-giving-up, unbreaking, always-and-forever love. That the Bible, in short, has a marvelous, coherent storyline — it's not just a collection of rules — and that there is only one Hero in the story. I wrote so children could meet the Hero in its pages. And become part of his magnificent story. Because rules don't change you. But a story — God's story, by the power of his Spirit — can.