

October 19, 2025

"Courageous Hope" – Bobby Warrenburg

Genesis 15:1-21

¹After 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."

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

⁴Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars-if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

⁸But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

⁹So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

¹⁰Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

¹⁷When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates- ¹⁹the

land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

Sermon Summary: Biblical hope isn't based on our circumstances or the strength of our faith, but on God's unwavering faithfulness-even when we can't see Him working.

Key Points:

1. The Nature of Hope - Abraham faced impossible circumstances (childless, landless, afraid), yet God called him to trust despite what he couldn't see. Hope and fear often coexist in the Christian life.
2. The Ground of Hope - In the covenant ceremony, God (symbolized by fire and smoke) walked alone between the severed animals while Abraham slept. This unprecedented act meant God took full responsibility for keeping His promises AND for the consequences of Abraham's failures.
3. Connecting to Hope - "Just get on the plane." It's not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the object of your faith-God Himself. Stop looking at your circumstances or analyzing your faith; look at the God who walks the path of faithfulness for you.

Like the disoriented turtle being dragged back to sea, we often can't tell if we're being saved or destroyed. But God proved through Christ (who walked the path perfectly and died the death we deserved) that He's committed to us "till death"-His own death-to bring us home.

1. There's a lot happening in Genesis 15! As we read through verses 1-21 together, identify the main sections or scenes. What's happening in each part, and how does the chapter move from beginning to end?
2. "Do Not Be Afraid" (v. 1) This is the first occurrence of "do not be afraid" in the Bible-a command that appears at least 157 times in Scripture. Why do you think this particular moment in Abraham's story warranted the first use of this phrase? What specifically might Abraham have been afraid of after chapter 14?
3. Abraham's Complaint (v. 2-3) Abraham essentially says, "I'm walking around naked"-experiencing the shame of childlessness despite being named "exalted father." How does understanding the cultural context of his complaint help us relate to his frustration with God's timing?
4. Bobby shared the that "Eliezer" meant "God is my help" and that in Hebrew writing his name adds up to 318 - the exact number of men who rescued Lot. How does this detail demonstrate God's hidden presence in Abraham's story? Where might God be present in ways you haven't noticed? Are you quick or slow to notice God's help in your life?
5. The sermon argues that biblical hope is "underdetermined by circumstances"-it doesn't arise from what we can see. How is this different from optimism or positive thinking? Why is this kind of hope so difficult to maintain?

6. The philosopher Seneca suggested we should abandon hope to eliminate fear. But the sermon says hope and fear must coexist in the Christian life. How have you experienced this tension? Is it realistic to expect all fear to disappear?
7. Look at the covenant ceremony in vs9-21. In ancient covenants, the lesser party would walk between the severed animals, essentially saying, "May I become like these animals if I break my promises." But in Genesis 15, God (represented by the smoking firepot and blazing torch) walks through alone while Abraham sleeps. What does this unprecedented action reveal about God's character and commitment?
8. The sermon connects this covenant ceremony to Jesus: "This is my torn apart body given for you. This is my blood for the forgiveness of your sins." How does Genesis 15 help us understand what Jesus accomplished on the cross? What does it mean that Jesus walked "the path of faithfulness" we should have walked and died "the death we should die"?
9. The sermon uses the airplane analogy: it's not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the object of your faith (the plane/God). Both the person with strong faith and trembling faith arrive at the destination if the plane is sound. How does this relieve pressure about the "strength" of your faith? What does "just get on the plane" mean practically?
10. "You'll never make your faith stronger by looking at your faith... Stop looking at that. Look at God." Where are you currently looking-at your circumstances, at your faith, or at God? What would it look like this week to redirect your gaze toward God's character and promises?
11. For those who feel like giving up-tired of being dragged through sand dunes-what reasons does this passage give to "stay on the plane"? What unseen deliverances might God be working in your life right now?
12. Abraham couldn't see how God had already been his "shield" and "reward" through the 318 men (Eliezer). Looking back, where can you now see God's hidden faithfulness in a season when you thought He was absent? How does remembering past faithfulness build hope for current struggles?
13. The sermon had opened with Barbara Brown Taylor's story of the disoriented loggerhead turtle being dragged back to sea. Have you ever felt like that or is there a situation like that right now where you feel like that, unsure whether God was rescuing you or your life was just falling apart? As you share pray together for one another and encourage each other practically with the hope of the gospel for your specific situations.