

Patriarchs

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 1: Abraham: The Father of Faith

Genesis 12 - 22

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- February 9, 2020

Hey, Grace! Yeah ... I have a black eye. So, let's get this behind us. I practice jiu jitsu and, as someone said today or earlier, I should practice more. So, he got a free lesson. This is the best it's looked. I caught a knee earlier and I think on Tuesday I caught a knee to the eye socket. So, this is the best it's looked in four days and this is with makeup on. But you should see the other ... girl. She's really good. I'm not sure she knew she hit me.

Anyway, let's move on. All right? Yes, it's a black eye.

This last week we took an offering for Austin LifeCare, but now it's called The Source Austin. We do this two weeks in a row because of a lot of people forget ... mostly the Cassidys. And we'll take it next week unless Melinda brought her checkbook. Did you bring your checkbook? Yes ... okay ... so we'll just have this one week left. You can write a check or put cash in an envelope up at the front desk, or you can do the new stuff where you text that and it will get to The Source. Or you can go through our Realm application and get it to them. I think we've raised over \$35,000 and I'll let you know more about that final detail ... yeah, give yourselves a hand ... I'll let you know about that.

At Grace we're going through the Bible together as a church. We're reading through the Bible and we're learning through the Bible and it culminates with a trip to the Holy Land. Why not? And if you'd like to join us on that trip we're going to have a meeting right after second service here across the lobby there at the old auditorium, and we'll talk about the trip to the Holy Land that will be starting the weekend of Thanksgiving. We'll tell you all it about it. It's a trip of a lifetime, one you won't forget, and you'll never read the Bible the same way. Anyway, that's how we're packaging that all together as part of our reading.

We're studying the Bible – if you'll turn to Genesis chapter 15 we're going to look now in our pilgrimage of the story that's told there. In Genesis chapter 15 we're going to see a radical, dramatic change in the storyline. There is literally a change in direction as this story is being told. And in this chapter, chapter 15 --- it's one of the more important chapters in the Bible – and

within that, there's going to be a sentence found that is the most important sentence in the Bible. It is the most often quoted sentence in the New Testament, because this sentence defines the doctrine of salvation. It will define in a single sentence the biblical doctrine of salvation. It defines faith.

We're going to introduce ourselves this week to a gentleman named Abraham. He'll be called Abram because when he has a radical change in his life he'll get a radical name change. He is known as the father of faith --- Abraham is the father of faith. He is the father of faith because he teaches us --- we'll see this -- he teaches us what faith means. And faith means living as though the promises of God are true. And that's what we're going to see in this man and we're going to learn how we should live accordingly.

Review: Adam and Eve – East of Eden

Now before we get to him, let's review very quickly. The story begins in Genesis 1 and 2 in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve are designed to rule and live in harmony. They doubt and reject God's love and sin. And in their sin as the first family all man are sinful because of that. We inherit the original sin. Original sin now becomes attached to the double helix of human experience.

After that we see that they are cast out east of Eden. And with each generation, each story that's being told, you'll see that the movement continues east, further and further away from home. And in that despair of chapters 4 through 11, it's trying to convince us of the absolute thoroughness and the depth of human sin. When I was reading it and listening to it this week, I hearkened back to an old folk song by David Wilcox. He says:

*Look, if someone wrote a play
Just to glorify what's stronger than hate
Would they not arrange the stage
To look as if the hero came too late?*

... To look like evil has absolutely won?

He's almost in defeat ...

And then what happens?

*On the edge of every seat
From the moment that the whole thing begins.*

That's this story. It is this digression and moving east. It says to the point where we're wondering if evil has a foe that can defeat it. Chapter 11, as it ends, we cry out, "Dear God, help us!" And that's where things change.

By Faith: Promise to Abraham's Odyssey

Chapter 12 – we turn the page and it's a new chapter with a new direction. Because in the cold darkness we hear this sentence in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. Here's what happens. "YHWH says to Abram, 'Leave.' Leave everything. Leave your family, leave your native country, leave all your father's relatives, and go ... go. Come to the land where I'm telling you to go, a land of promise."

And what happens is there's this movement going east – east away from Eden. This is the first person who moves west. The patriarchs going back to where we were designed to live in harmony with each other and with God. And here's what He says to Abram. He says, "I will bless you and make you famous and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who treat you with contempt. And all the families on earth will be blessed through you." You will have a descendant who will fix this, this thing that we broke that we can't fix.

And Abram heard that and he did as he was instructed. So he went up and headed west to the promised land. He's heading west, finally. Only God can fix this because He is ... listen ... sovereign. Because God is sovereign, He will make this work.

In Genesis chapter 12 Abram is seventy-five years old. He has no children. His wife is just under that age and she was barren when she was in the birth-giving years. And now she is way past that. When we pick up the story in Genesis chapter 15, the story we're going to study today, he's eighty-five years old. It's ten years later. And at this point, he's left everything, he's moved on. The promise of God giving him an heir so that he would form a nation and then someone would be blessed through that heritage --- he's starting to doubt that. And so, ten years after the original promise, chapter 15, verse 1, God speaks to Abram again.

Sovereign = Power + Plan

Now here's the key to understanding today's lesson. It's kind of the word of the chapter, maybe the word of salvation. The word is "sovereign." So that you understand this, because "sovereign" is both a title and a character trait or attribute, because a sovereign is a king, but a sovereign is supposed to have the ability to be sovereign. And "sovereign" means this: that person has power and a plan. You can have a plan but not have the power to do it. That's most of us, right? And then you can have power but not have a plan. God is sovereign; He has power and He has a plan. He has told a bit of that plan to Abram, and Abram is starting to doubt that. And so, he's having this conversation again. Remember the word "sovereign" because this is the first time Abram will talk to God. God has talked to Abraham, or Abram, but now he's going to respond. Chapter 15, verse 1: "The Lord says to Abram, 'Do not be afraid, Abram.'" He's having a vision. "I am your shield and I am your very great reward."

Problem: Does God Have the Power?

First words from Abram to God. He says, "O sovereign YHWH ..." --- he's appealing to that -- "what can you give me since I don't have an heir? I have a lot of stuff but there's no one in my family to inherit it. I'm going to have to give this to my hired help."

The problem is --- the issue of sovereignty, sure, and particularly, the issue of power. *Do you have the power to fulfill the promise that You made to me in Genesis chapter 12, that I would have many heirs?*

Solution: God Takes Abram Outside

And so, this is what God does. He takes him outside. The solution is "Let's go outside." I love that phrase because it's as though the Lord is in this tent with him and He says, "Let's go outside." And He says, "Look. Look at this." He has him stare into the night sky. "Abram, count the stars ... if you can. You'll have more descendants than there are stars in the night sky."

Do you think ...? Abram must have thought, *Does He have the power to cause birth in this family?* And then stares at this. *The one who speaks this into existence --- it won't be a problem.*

And so, He says, “So shall your offspring be.”

Genesis 15:6

Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness.

And now here it is. Here’s the sentence, the one that defines salvation. It says, verse 6, “Abram believed in the Lord, YHWH, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” That is one powerful sentence. “And Abram believed” --- that means he trusted YHWH, that name, that formal name. He trusted YHWH. That’s what Abram did. But what does God do because of that belief? It says that it was credited to him as righteousness. This is the sentence that comes up in the New Testament when it’s defining what salvation faith means. “It was credited to him as righteousness.” Other translations will say, “It was reckoned to him ...” --- it’s an accounting term. So it will say “imputed to him.” Imputation means all at once, a lump sum, the righteousness of God is given to him all at once. It’s done, it’s complete. It’s a task that’s already finished. That’s what it means. He believed in Him --- He believed in YHWH – and God says, *Yeah, you’re righteous.*

Problem: Does God Have a Plan?

So, what’s going to happen in our drama now, in our storyline, is that Abram needs to know this has happened to him, that this has been accredited to him as righteousness. He needs to be able to remember this, remember what he believes. So as this progresses, what’s happening is that Abram, in his continued conversation with the sovereign Lord, says, *Oh, hey, I’ve seen the stars. I get it. You have the power. But do you have the plan? I’m not sure about the plan. I have doubts about this.*

And God says to him, “I am YHWH, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans and I’m going to give you all of this land so that you might possess it.”

And it says, “But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign YHWH, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?’”

Doubt

See, that's the issue – certainty. He needs confidence. He has doubts. And so, I want to pause for a second in the subject matter of doubt. Doubting is not the antithesis of faith. No, no. The Christian faith, real faith, is actually a plant that grows out of the soil of doubt. Hold on to some attribute of God that you question, you doubt, you're not certain of. Cling to it. Don't let it go. Argue with God. Let's see what happens. Sometimes, most of the time, great faith in one of these attributes of God comes from it proceeded by months and sometimes of years of doubt about it. We stay with the conversation, we stay with the subject matter. God says, *Come on, let's go. Test me and see. I want to talk about this doubt of yours.* So, this is the father of faith, and the father of faith has doubts, and God says, *Yes, let's do that.*

Solution: Cut a Covenant

So, the problem in this context is not the power, it's the plan. And the solution is for God to cut a covenant with Abram – cut a covenant. And so, when we look at this cutting a covenant, I want you to see a couple of things. First of all, the motive of God: why is God doing this? God is doing this because God is answering Abram's doubts. And so, in His kindness, God is going to stoop down and communicate with Abram using cultural customs that Abram already knows. And those cultural customs are literally already used to solidify certainty. This is such a joyful thing to see, because God is coming down and saying, *Oh, what do you know? How do you keep score? How do you know things are certain in your world using your language?* And he says, *Covenants.* And God says, *Okay, let's make a covenant together.*

And so, in the ancient Near East, they had different types of covenants. Covenants are kind of like contracts but higher, with more mettle to them. And the highest ranking is a blood covenant, which is life and death. In a blood covenant, what would happen is that two men, generally speaking --- they were almost entirely men making these covenants – and they would get an animal and they would cut that mammal in half and put the two sides on each side, and in the middle would be this pooling blood. And then whatever the contract was, you would hold hands together or lock arms together and walk through that puddle of blood. And you would chant, "What happened to this animal might happen to me. May it happen to me if I don't fulfill

the promises that I'm making in this contract. What happened to this animal, may it happen to me if I don't fulfill the promises I'm making in this contract."

And then, quite often, they would exchange bloody sandals so that, if there was ever a contention made about that contract, someone could say, "Well, I never made that contract." "Really? Then how come Biff has your bloody sandals?" That was like the paperwork being done there. That's the covenant that was cultural that was regularly expressed in this time period, a suzerain vassal treaty, a kind of covenant.

God said, *Yes, okay. So, I'm going to speak to you in your language and your terms.* But YHWH, God, always extravagant, tells Abram, *Get some mammals. Not one.* He says, *We're going to need five animals: a heifer, a goat, a lamb. We'll need a dove and a pigeon. Cut them. Cut them up. It's going to be a lot of blood.*

And so, he takes these animals in the prime of their lives --- three years old for the mammals – the heifer, the goats, the lamb. He cuts those in half and puts them ... And then the dove and the pigeon are just two years old, prime of their lives, and kills them. That puddles. And then it says in the Bible that birds of prey suddenly come screeching down to assault the carcasses. Now that's a strange sentence in the midst of this story, especially in light of God being sovereign. *What, you couldn't keep the birds away?* No, the birds are allowed to be there by God so that, in this most spiritual demonstration of God's love covenant of salvation, He wants you and I to know this. That's we're in a spiritual war for our souls. We live in two realms, my friend. And in that other realm, that spiritual realm, demons and angels, when we have spiritual conversations of consequence, they try to invade those. In the original covenant ritual, this is expressed by the birds of prey. Abram chases those away. And then it's time to sign. Let's go. Let's do this. Let's lock arms, let's walk through.

Genesis 15:12-13

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants ..."

Here's what happens: "And when the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. And then YHWH said to him, 'Know for certain that

your descendants ...” Look what it says --- “Know for certain ...” --- just to be clear, all of this is to make certain that the faith in Abram brought him righteousness as a gift. So, He goes on. He says --- remember the question was about the plan? --- “Know for certain this, that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

I have power. I have a plan. Is this an awesome plan? He says, Abram, I'll tell you what's going to happen for the next 500 years. Here's what's going to happen. Your heirs are not ready yet, they're not big enough, and so, they're going to go to Egypt so they can form a nation. But do you know what? Egypt is not quite ripe for its lesson to be learned, so we have to wait for them to get ready. And then meanwhile, by the way, the people that are living in the promised land --- I'm going to give them four or five hundred years to repent. If not, they'll be held responsible for that. How's that plan? Details good enough? Here's why I want you to know that. Because there will be times in those 400 or 500 years that you'll be thinking that the evil side has won, the hero has come too late. I want you to know now before it happens that it's all part of this plan. I am YHWH and I am sovereign. That's my powerful plan.

Genesis 15:17-18

When 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 river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.”

Listen. Here's what happens next. “And when the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch” – that's YHWH, right? – “appeared and passed between the two pieces. On that day YHWH made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.’”

Did you see what happened? The covenant was being cut and it was time for them to walk through together and it says very specifically that Abram goes into a deep, dark sleep and only YHWH walks through and makes the promises.

Three Important Words Regarding Salvation

There are three very important words that describe biblical salvation. Each of these are life-altering. This is what happened. This is the salvation covenant.

Unilateral: One Way

One is unilateral. That means it's one way. Only one person signed the contract. Can you imagine if a unilateral covenant was involved in your mortgage? This is what a mortgage covenant/contract looks like. I go there and my bank says that they're going to pay the previous owner and I swear that I'm going to pay the bank. Then it's time – all the papers show up and everyone gets new pens, because it will be a while, and stacks of papers. Ready, sign! And I go to sleep. You fall asleep during your own closing. You wake up and say, *What happened?* And the attorney says, *Well, the bank signed all their paperwork, so they're going to pay the previous owner, but you don't have to pay anything. Your house is free.* That's what unilateral looks like. That's this covenant. Only one person signed it, only YHWH.

Unconditional: It's Not About You

Second, it's unconditional. It's an unconditional covenant. What did Abram do? He fell asleep. The salvation covenant is not doing something; it's receiving something.

Immutable: Cannot Change

And finally, the salvation covenant is immutable. It's can't be changed. And the reason I say this is because it's important, in the Old Testament and the New. Because when you sign a contract, this contract, you sign on the bottom line. Why do you sign on the bottom line? So no one can add anything below it. You can't add to this contract, this covenant. And so, this covenant is signed by God in blood at the bottom so that later, 430 years later when God makes a covenant with Moses, you don't get to staple that to the bottom of this. That's a different kind of

a covenant for a different purpose. You don't get salvation and then earn it with the Ten Commandments, that covenant. Just like in the New Testament, people say, I'm going to receive salvation by grace and then I'm going to earn it through works. It's immutable. You can't change it. This is the covenant. Like it says right here, it is unilateral, unconditional, and immutable. That's the salvation covenant.

Implication #1: Logic: Why Not Continue to Sin?

So I want to bring all of this to a couple of conclusions. Here's the first conclusion. This is the logic of it. So, if God paid everything on our soul's behalf and if we believe that to be true and we're paid in full, then why not continue to sin? Why not actually increase sinning? I mean, if I had a trip somewhere or a vacation where it was all expenses paid – are you with me? – the expenses are going to go up, up, up. All expenses? Then I'm going to make sure I get all the expenses. That makes sense because that's logical. That's right.

If you think that's what this kind of salvation covenant is suggesting, then ... well, you're right. That's the point. It does make sense.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the famous British pastor and Bible scholar, said this: "A very good test of gospel preaching that leads to people being accused of promoting irresponsible living – that's the test. If my preaching presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose this, then it is not the gospel." In other words, that makes perfect sense. You're right.

And here's how you can know this to be true. Some of you are annoyed with this, but, yeah. If you're preaching the gospel, it leads people to believe logically that they can do whatever they want. That's what happened in the New Testament. So, Paul writes the Romans and says, *Look, if everything is free and salvation is a free gift, then should sin not increase?* See how he makes that logical step? He says it in Galatians: "Do not let your freedom be a license to continue to sin more." In Jude it says, "Do not turn God's grace into lewdness." The reason that he says that each time is because people are doing the math. If grace does not have the potential to be taken advantage of, it doesn't have the power to transform. So, that's the logic of the gospel.

Implication #2: Meaning

But the meaning of the gospel is this, because each time that accusation is brought up, the answer is always the same for the Holy Father. “For God so loved the world, loved you, that He gave His only Son.” What? You want to take advantage of “For God so loved you that He gave His only Son to be killed on your behalf”? You want to take advantage of that?

See, the writers of the gospels say this. “Let’s go outside. Let’s look.”

Who are you talking about? Who are you talking to?

Faith alone saves, but a saving faith is never alone. Dwight Edwards says this: “If grace makes sense to you, I doubt you’re close enough to really see it. The real thing defies comprehension ... but not experience. Grace is God’s irrational, unimaginable kindness.”

That’s what grace is. You can look at it logically and say, *I can run up the score*. And you look at the meaning of it and say, *How can I get closer to holiness?* Not *How can I get closer to sin?* Saving faith says, *How can I get closer to the Lord?*

This is an entirely different kind of religion. That’s why some people say Christianity isn’t a religion. Every religion says that justice is the primary sum expression of justice, and some people will get what they deserve. And then those religions will add mercy, because mercy is withholding one of these things that you deserve, or judgment. Christianity says, *No, no, we’re going to add ...* Christianity adds grace so that you’re getting what you don’t deserve – righteousness.

Why This Method of Salvation?

Why is this method of salvation in the Bible? Why does God choose this way, strategically, logically? The first reason is the nature of man. We can’t do this. Forget us and we – you. Do you want to be on that contract? Do you want to sign that? Do you want to be responsible to God to do your part? Wow.

The second thing about the nature of man that keeps us from being part of this type of salvation is that God, in His values, in His soul and His heart, realizes that our souls are too precious to delegate this important to us. In other words, He knows that we can’t be trusted with something this precious and says, *I’ll get this. I’ll take all of this.*

Now that's kind of one way of looking at this method of salvation and why. But here's another reason and the primary reason that's much deeper. This method of salvation – all the glory goes to God. All of it. That's all we can talk about. We bring nothing to this but sin. And so, when we tell our friends and our families, and demons and angels are overhearing our conversation, all we go on and on and on about is the love and the glory of a sovereign and just, holy God. That's why.

What do we do? We sleep through it. That's what we do.

Application #1: Assurance of Salvation

In the context of applying this, I was thinking this week, there are two absolutely easy ways to apply this, or easy ways to maybe understand it. One is, in the doctrine of salvation itself as it applies to you, maybe in your life you've been attending church or you've been keeping score maybe in way that is kind of a religious way and thinking that your name is on the contract. I'd ask you today, this morning, to choose what the Bible says is the doctrine of salvation. And that is a unilateral, unconditional, immutable contract that only God signs. And maybe today you could say, *Okay, I get it. I trust in that YHWH*. And with that, it is credited to you as His righteousness.

Another way to apply this section of Scripture is how it was applied to Abram's life. How can I be sure? How can I be certain? And so, God, in His love and in His mercy, comes down and says, I'm going to show you in a way that you understand what unconditional, unilateral, immutable looks like. And so, this is to help us understand that we can have certainty about our eternal destiny and our standing before God right now.

If I interrupt this for just a second and say, What kind of God would allow you to be uncertain about eternity? Think about that. Not knowing.

Are you going to go to heaven?

I don't know. I'll ask God.

And He says, *We'll see. You'll know when you get here. We'll have that talk. Hope you make it.*

That's not a loving God. And so, God says, *I want you to know. I want you to be sure. And I want you to understand where it's from – it's all from me*. So maybe today you drive a stake in the ground in the journey of your soul and say, *I'm not going to negotiate this anymore*.

There's no way I can go to hell, there's no way I can't get to heaven. He promised – I believe that we're done. That would be a great way to live forward. You could live courageously.

He holds your hand. You're not holding His and He's not going to let go of you. That's what this passage says.

Application #2: Identity

Another way to apply this is – well, in the context of what we talk about here, become like Christ in all of life. How do you apply this doctrine of salvation that's true to your identity? How does it show up in your identity? Because if faith is living as though the promises of God are true, and this is true, then where is there a place for threat towards your ego or your reputation? What do you care about your reputation? And why is your ego threatened? It can't experience shame. Not if this is true and you're living as though it's true. Your identity is defined by this kind of contract, this type of salvation.

Let me give you --- this is very helpful, I think, to illustrate --- it's a physical illustration of what's happening in a person's soul. It would be called a contrast of confessions – people applying or not applying this to their identity, this doctrine.

Maybe a couple of years ago we had to confront a man that was a big man. He was a big man over six feet tall and he memorized and taught a lot of Bible facts. I'm not sure he knew what the meanings of those facts were. But he spent most of his life in Bible teaching churches and taught Bible facts as well. He was confronted with emotionally and verbally and biblically (using the Bible as a club) abusing his wife. The evidence was irrefutable. And in that confrontation, he said, "It's her fault." And he didn't even know by saying "It's her fault", he was quoting Adam: "It's the woman you gave me." That's not a Bible verse you want to be quoting. In all of that, we thought, *What happened? Why was he so threatened?* Because he had a reputation and it could be lost. What does he care about a reputation? His reputation is that he's a child of the living God. But there was shame. There's no shame! There's no shame in being a child of God. Because all of your shame was strapped to the back of Jesus Christ when He was walking through Jerusalem naked and people were mocking Him. Shame is done. Now, if he believed in the promise of salvation, he would know that he has inherited the honor of Jesus Christ. So you can't be shamed. So, here's an example of someone who knows but doesn't understand. That's not living in faith; that's just knowing facts about it.

Last week I had a conversation with a young woman who was small. When she would raise her voice, it would sound like a whisper. She doesn't know very much Bible, she's relatively new to the faith. And she was confronted with some things, and she took responsibility for that and she said, "I've learned to end my apologies with this: 'Is there anything else? Is there any other way that I might have offended you that I might take responsibility? Because I have found that I am so self-centered that I can do damage all around me and not even know the injury I'm causing. So could you please tell me, is there anything else?'"

Now what is this 100-pound young lady thinking? She's thinking, *I'm not threatened. And I have no shame.* She is living as though the promises of God are true, and the promises that who she is, who she belongs to, is a gift of God, only God. It is by faith, it is by grace only. And so, she stands solid and secure. She has become like Christ in her identity. And that's why she's the stronger of the two. That's what faith looks like, as attached to identity.

Here's what I have found --- that you and I easily forget what God has done. We don't know the thoroughness of what unconditional, unilateral, immutable grace does to us. Wouldn't it be great if God would stoop again, and give us – I don't know – a covenant reminder? And so, that's what the Lord's table is all about, my friends. That's what this is for. It's for the forgetful.

Communion

If you're one of the ushers, go back and get the bread and start passing it out as soon as you get it. And if you have come here, and maybe even today is the first day – if you have trusted that the promise of God is true, that His Son died for you so that you might be imputed with His righteousness, we'd love for you to join us as a family. We'll take the bread together. But the reason there is a Lord's table is because of our forgetfulness. It is because we are weak. It is because we wonder. And we need someone, we need God to say, *Okay, let me try to communicate this in a way that you can understand in language that you can understand.* So He takes the covenant, the Passover covenant, the one that takes place in the Book of Exodus, and He says, "I'm going to have you do this." And it's not Passover anymore --- it's called the Lord's covenant or the Lord's table.

And He does this. The night He was betrayed, He took the bread and He breaks it --- think about this --- He breaks it and He says, "This is my body, which is broken for you." Two

parts -- like He just cut a covenant. And we're to take this bread when we have doubts about the sovereign God and we wonder, *Does He have power? Can His power really change me? Because I have an addiction to sin that I can't overcome and I wonder if He has power.* And He says, "Hey, let's go back to this table and remember about a covenant that was cut that was to remind you of my sovereign power." So, would you think about that as we pass out this bread? We'll take the bread together and be reminded of the power of God.

[Music interlude.]

Let's take the bread together.

That same night --- you can pass out the drink --- that same night Jesus took the cup and He said --- now we know what a covenant is --- "This is the blood of the new covenant. This is my blood of the new covenant." Jesus is saying, *I know you're going to have doubts about my sovereign power, but also about my plan. I have plans for you. I have plans for creation. There will be a final day. I will return. I will return with a trumpet blow. You'll know. And I know you'll doubt that plan. But this blood -- this is my blood. This is the blood between this broken mammal. And don't get your feet in this -- let it cover your soul.*

So, when the Father looks down on you and all you see is your sin and you can't overcome that, He looks down and sees the blood of His Son and your imputed righteousness. Meditate on that, the sovereign plan for God for your life.

[Music interlude.]

My brothers and sisters, let's take the cup together.

Now when Jesus finished, He said, "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, do this in remembrance of me until I come in glory." *Until I come in glory* -- why would He say that? Because as time goes by we grow weary in doing good. We grow weary in wondering if God is sovereign. Does He have power. Look at the world -- does He have a plan? It doesn't look like it.

And Jesus says, *No, no, no. Listen. Let's do this so that we remember the sovereign holiness and the justice of God that's coming.* When Abraham died -- when he was alive, he was

promised that his descendants would inherit everything from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River. When Abraham died, he owned a graveyard plot. All he owned was a tomb, first to bury his wife, and then him. But he lived by faith that he would own all that land someday --- his descendants would. His grandson Jacob --- he and his family of seventy-two end up in Egypt. When Jacob died, he said, "Bury me with Abraham." And they had quite the funeral procession to bring him back and bury him in that one place owned by the Jews, that graveyard, that tomb. And when Abraham's great-grandson Joseph died, second in command in Egypt -- and when royalty dies in Egypt, they can do quite a tombstone -- you might have seen them -- the pyramids. And Joseph said, *I'll have none of that. Save my bones. And 400 years that was promised to Abraham --- In 400 years we'll be leaving. Take my bones. Bury me with my great-grandfather and my grandfather and my father.*

That's living by faith. It's already happened, but not yet. It's already been declared that we're righteous. We just don't get to enjoy it right now. We get a taste of Eden. We're on our way back. We're headed west.

Jesus said, "Whenever you practice this, do this in remembrance of me. I'm coming back. Justice. I'll make things right."

Would you do this? Would you stand with me? Let's sing this last verse together. Could you please read these words. Pray the words back as we sing together.

[Music interlude]

[Prayer] *Oh, glorious God, oh, YHWH, that You would do this. It is the only way, but it wasn't necessary. So, we celebrate Your love for us, that You are powerful and You have a plan and we are in that plan. We enjoy salvation that is unilateral, unconditional, unchangeable; that You hold our hands, that we don't hold Yours. Glory, glory to God. You are so great.*

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us understand how to let this grace touch every part of our life, that we might find ourselves bold, not shy; courageous, not timid. That we would find ourselves without shame, without fear; that we would live lives that glorify You. That we would brag to all of creation of Your glory. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

