

Community Bible Church

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 15

The late theologian Dr. R.C. Sproul has referred to **Genesis chapter 15** as one of his favorite chapters of the entire Bible. He calls it "*monumental*" in nature. Not only does God speak to Abram to comfort him and renew His promises, but in **verse 6** the gospel of salvation by faith is expressed with clarity for the very first time. "***Then Abram believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.***" This verse is repeated three times in the New Testament.

Later in the chapter, in a remarkable drama which Sproul refers to as a "***condescending theophany***" God participates, unilaterally, in a covenant ratification ceremony in **verses 17-18**. "***After the sun set, it was very dark and there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces and on that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.***" The Abrahamic Covenant of a promised land and people is restated several times in these chapters on Abraham.

Chapter 15 can be viewed as having two main sections and is outlined as follows:

Abram's Faulty Assumption 15:1-3
God's Faithful Assurance 15:4-21

1. In **15:1**, God speaks to Abram in a vision. What words of comfort does he hear? From **chapter 14**, what might cause Abram to be fearful? From **15:2-3**, why else might he be fearful?
2. How does God graciously respond to this concern in **15:4-5**?
3. The pinnacle verse of this chapter is found in **15:6** which is foundational in understanding the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. The word *reckoned* means count, attribute to, impute, or put into one's account. By faith, Jesus' perfect righteousness was imputed to us, allowing us to stand righteous, innocent and forgiven before a holy God. This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament. Read each of these passages and describe the meaning intended by the New Testament author.
 - (a) **Romans 4:22-23**
 - (b) **Galatians 3:6**
 - (c) **James 2:23**

4. Read the brief dialogue in **15:7-8**, and, using your own words, write a shorter translation of these two verses.

5. In **15:9-21**, God responds to Abram's very human and sincere question of **15:8**; How can I know this for sure? Read the entire passage (**15:9-21**) for familiarity. This strange ritual, or ceremony, enacted by God has been called a "covenant renewal" or "ratification ceremony." This was a known practice in that day where parties entering into an agreement or contract would walk between parts of dead animals. This was called "cutting a covenant." The symbolism, or meaning, has been described as follows: ***"If any party fails to keep their word, or break the agreement, they deserve the same fate as the animals."*** Stated another way, each party was affirming ***"may I be cut in half if I violate this contract."*** In **15:17**, the glory of God, in the form of a theophany, graciously, humbly, and unilaterally passed between the animals thus affirming His promise and giving Abraham the assurance he was looking for. What does this passage teach you about God, about His relationship with Abram and His relationship with us today?

6. What very specific and remarkable information did God reveal to Abram in **15:13-16** and **15:18-21**?

7. One commentator has written regarding **Genesis 15** the following: *When Abram was concerned about himself, God assured him by saying 'I am'. When he was concerned about his heir, God said 'I will'. The concern about the land was met by God's 'I have given'.* What is one personal, application for your life today from **Genesis 15**?