

**Main Idea: To those who cling to Jesus with weak, struggling faith, God responds with assuring mercy.**

**Introduction:** How does God respond to those who cling to Jesus with weak, struggling faith? The passage that we have today is a marvelous display of the mercy and patience of God.

**1. God's mercy in SPEAKING to Abram**

When Abram asks, "how shall I know" in v8, we want to scream into the text, "Because God just told you! Don't you realize that the living God is speaking to you?!!" Already, before any of God's response to His dear one's weak faith, great mercy is on display. God speaks to Abram! But we are not in a position to criticize, are we? Don't we have the breathed-out words of God on the pages of the Bible? And do we marvel at and cherish at God's having spoken and continuing to speak to us?

**2. God's mercy in PATIENCE with Abram**

God's response is not to admonish but to assist. He gives Abram instruction for an oath ceremony—not because the Word of God itself is made more sure, but because He is going to present it in a way that is more sure to Abram's weak faith. The Lord does this throughout Scripture, and He does it for us today with the sacraments. God is being patient with Abram.

**3. God's mercy in EXPLAINING to Abram**

God also explains more to Abram. He owes Abram no more details. The secret things belong to our God. But, just as Jesus said that He treats us as friends by bringing us into what He is doing (Jn 15:15), so also God treats Abram as a friend (here, and especially in Gen 18:17-19). We too are given not merely commands but much to support us as God opens His mind to us and tells us what He is doing.

**4. God's mercy in ASSURING Abram**

What we see is that God is assuring Abram. This is important, because Scripture says that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom 8:7-10; 14:23; Heb 11:6; ). So, God takes His weakly believing servant and gives his faith a booster shot. The Lord wants us to be sure, and tells us to pursue that assurance too (2Pet 1:10). God assures His people.

**5. God's mercy in KILLING Himself(!) instead of Abram**

But perhaps the most amazing thing in this passage is how it is that God assures Abram. In this oath ceremony, the dead animals on either side form a walkway of blood between them, calling down the curse of death upon whomever breaks the promise. But God does not have Abram walk between the pieces. He manifests Himself in two different ways to walk between the pieces! It will be Himself that God kills (which He will have to become a man to do) in order to keep His promise to Abram. The difference between Abram and the Amorites is not that the Amorites are sinners, and Abram is not. The difference is that Abram has the death of Christ!

**Conclusion:** Are you clinging to Christ? And if so, are you employing His means for assurance?