

## What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM

### “God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

#### SESSION #3: Genesis 15:1-21

##### TEXT:

v. 1 After 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.”

v. 2 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”

v. 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

v. 4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”

v. 5 He took him outside and said, “Look at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

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

v. 7 He 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.”

v. 8 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

v. 9 So 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.”

v.10 Abram 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.

v.11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

v.12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

v.13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.

v.14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

v.15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.

v.16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

v.17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

v.18 On 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—

v.19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

v.20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,

v.21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

**INTRODUCTION:****Comments Made in 1957**

I'll tell you one thing, if things keep going the way they are, it's going to be impossible to buy a week's groceries for \$20.00.

Have you seen the new cars coming out next year? It won't be long before \$2000 will only buy a used one.

If cigarettes keep going up in price, I'm going to quit. A quarter a pack is ridiculous.

Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging a dime just to mail a letter?

If they raise the minimum wage to \$1, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store.

When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 29 cents a gallon. Guess we'd be better off leaving the car in the garage.

Kids today are impossible. Those duck-tail hair cuts make it impossible to stay groomed. Next thing you know, boys will be wearing their hair as long as the girls.

I'm afraid to send my kids to the movies any more. Ever since they let Clark Gable get by with saying, "damn" in "Gone With The Wind," it seems every new movie has either hell or damn in it.

I read the other day where some scientist thinks it's possible to put a man on the moon by the end of the century. They even have some fellows they call astronauts preparing for it down in Texas.

Did you see where some baseball player just signed a contract for \$75,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn't surprise me if someday they'll be making more than the president.

I never thought I'd see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric. They are even making electric typewriters now.

It's too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet.

It won't be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work.

Marriage doesn't mean a thing any more; those Hollywood stars seem to be getting divorced at the drop of a hat.

I'm just afraid the Volkswagen car is going to open the door to a whole lot of foreign business.

Thank goodness I won't live to see the day when the Government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to Parliament.

The drive-in restaurant is convenient in nice weather, but I seriously doubt they will ever catch on.

There is no sense going to Lincoln or Omaha anymore for a weekend. It costs nearly \$15 a night to stay in a hotel.

No one can afford to be sick any more; \$35 a day in the hospital is too rich for my blood.

If they think I'll pay 50 cents for a hair cut, forget it.

**(Received via email from David Stubblefield, May 19, 2006)**

### **Husband Concerned About Wife's Hearing**

A concerned husband goes to see the family doctor: "I think my wife is deaf. She never hears me the first time I say something. In fact, I often have to repeat things over and over again."

"Well," the doctor replies, "go home tonight, stand about 15 feet from her, and say something. If she doesn't reply, move about five feet closer and say it again. Keep doing this so we can get an idea of the severity of her deafness."

Sure enough, the husband goes home, and he does exactly as instructed. He stands about 15 feet from his wife, who is standing in the kitchen, chopping some vegetables.

"Honey, what's for dinner?"

He gets no response, so he moves about five feet closer and asks again.

"Honey, what's for dinner?"

No reply.

He moves five feet closer, and still no reply.

He gets fed up and moves right behind her—about an inch away—and asks one final time, "Honey, what's for dinner?"

She replies, "For the fourth time, vegetable stew!"

*Submitted by Aaron Goerner, Utica, New York*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

**(PreachingToday.com)**

### **Man Ignores Answer to Prayer**

A businessman was late for an important meeting and couldn't find a parking space. As he frantically circled the block, the man got so desperate that he decided to pray.

Looking up toward heaven, he said, "Lord, take pity on me. If you find me a parking space, I'll go to church every Sunday for the rest of my life, and not only that, I'll give up drinking."

Miraculously, a parking space appeared.

The guy looked up again and said, "Never mind. I found one."

*Submitted by John Beukema, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

**(PreachingToday.com)**

(Still Lookin' by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services Company. Copyright – Joe Kreger (poetry) and Doane Agricultural Services Company (book), 2000.

### *First Bareback Ride*

The National Anthem's old refrain  
flowed through the evening air.  
My heart was really poundin',  
but I was glad that I was there.

I stood tall at attention,  
my hat across my chest.  
I was here to ride tonight.  
I'd do my very best.

A ewe-necked grulla outlaw  
filled chute number three.  
I knew the one who had 'im drawed.  
I reckoned it was me.

The music stopped; the crowd cheered.  
I grabbed my bareback rig.  
The grulla kept kickin' at the chute  
and snortin' like a pig.

I set my rig on his humped-up back,  
snagged the cinch beneath his belly.  
I swallowed down my dip of Skoal.  
My intestines felt like jelly.

I jerked the cinch and tied it off,  
pulled my glove tight on my hand.  
The director said, "You're up next, kid."  
The crowd cheered in the stand.

I pulled my hat down to my ears,  
climbed astraddle of the chute.  
My brand new Jerry Ambler gaffs  
was jinglin' from each boot.

The moment of truth was nearly here.  
I reached down and got a grip.  
I eased my weight down on him  
and boarded that grulla ship.

I pulled up hard and leaned back.  
 I turned out both my toes.  
 Ol' grulla kept on kickin'  
 an' blew the rollers in his nose.

My nerves was tight as fiddle strings,  
 my muscles tense as steel.  
 Sight and sound was both turned off.  
 I was ridin' just by feel.

It seemed like an eternity.  
 Then, the chute hand sealed my fate.  
 He messed up a dang good bareback ride  
 when he opened up the gate.  
 pp. 36-37

In our last study we left Abram settled by the **OAKS OF MAMRE** which are in Hebron and there **HE BUILT AN ALTAR** to the Lord.

Lot, his nephew, having chosen the well-watered plains of Jordan, pitched his tents toward Sodom.

Since our last study in Genesis 13, and in order for us to pick up in the study in Genesis 15, there are a number of things which occur in the Genesis 14.

We have the **BATTLE OF THE FOUR KINGS** against five and the four kings are victorious.

Among the five kings who are defeated you have:

**THE KING OF SODOM** and

**THE KING OF GOMORRAH.**

When they were defeated, verse 12 tells us:

Genesis 14:12

They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

We should take a moment to **FOCUS** on the words:

**"living in Sodom."**

Lot is on the downhill slide, cooperating fully with the process of compromise.

Abram receives the message of **LOT'S CAPTURE** and immediately organizes his 318 trained men and went in pursuit of the victorious armies of the four kings.

In verse 15 it tells us:

Genesis 14:15

During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

As a result of **ABRAM'S VICTORY**, verse 16 tells us

Genesis 14:16

He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

How good God is and gracious to give victory in the face of overwhelming odds when we are willing to be dependent upon Him.

R. C. Sproul in his book The Holiness of God makes a humorous reference to the battle of the four kings against five. The record is described in verses 9-11:

Genesis 14:9-11

against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills. The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away.

(The Holiness of God by R. C. Sproul) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright – R. C. Sproul, 1985, 1998.

A humorous use of the repetition device may be seen in Genesis 14. The story of the battle of the kings in the Valley of Siddim mentions men who fell in the great tar pits of the region. Some translators call them asphalt pits, or bitumen pits, or simply great pits. Why the confusion in translation? Exactly what kind of pits were they? The Hebrew is unclear. The original text gives the Hebrew word for pit and then simply repeats it. The story speaks literally of pit pits. The Jew was saying that there are pits and there are pits. Some pits are pittier than other pits. These pits—the pit pits—were the pittiest pits of all. It is one thing to fall into a pit. But if you fall into a pit pit, you are in deep trouble.

p. 25

The scene of our study in Genesis 15 opens with the acknowledgement that Abram has been given victory over the four victorious kings and has retrieved Lot and all of his possessions along with the other citizens that were taken captive along with their possessions as well.

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary** says:

After Abram's rescue of Lot and blessing from Melchizedek, the Lord formally made a covenant with Abram, thereby confirming the promise given earlier (12:2-3). God warned, however, that there would be a long period of enslavement (15:13).

**Anderson** says:

Consider this: he probably started thinking about the four kings he had defeated. It had been a victory against all odds. With only 318 men he had routed a vast opposing force. Just what, he may have thought, was going to happen to him when those four enemy commanders analyzed the battle? Wouldn't they seek revenge for their shameful loss? Mightn't they come back angry, thirsty for vengeance, wanting to teach him a lesson? "Surely they will strike," he must have thought. "The question is when, and what will happen to me?" He desperately longed to know if the God who gave him the victory on the battlefield would continue to protect him in the peaceful seclusion of Mamre.

p. 70

**Hughes** says:

***ABRAM AND FAITH: THE LANDMARK PRINCIPLE (vv. 1-6)***

Now, in the aftermath, Abram's great heart slows and spasms with doubt and fear. This is not uncommon to human experience following strenuous victories. Elijah suffered similar effects after his victory over the priests of Baal at Mt. Carmel, even fleeing to the wilderness and asking God to let him die (cf. 1 Kings 18, 19). Abram was tired, fearful, and despondent. Humanly, Abram had reasons to fear reprisals from the eastern coalition. Bigger armies might return.

Abram also had plenty of time for reflection in the postbellum quiet—his great victory had not brought him any nearer his promised inheritance.

p. 222

**Hughes says further:**

Long ago when he first responded to God's call, Sarah was barren (cf. 11:30). Their journey had begun in barrenness, but with hope in God's promise. But the thousand-mile journey, the sojourn in Canaan, the fiasco in Egypt, the return to Canaan, and the victory over the kings were all carried out under the shadow of barrenness. Now barrenness persisted. Abram's servants had children. Other men's children clung to his garments. Likely, Abram mused, "So what if everybody knows my name from the Nile to the Euphrates? So what if I'm rich? What difference does it make if I have no children?" Restless, dark doubt gripped his faltering heart. Fearless Abram feared.  
pp. 222-23

**McGee says:**

We come to one of the high points of the Bible here in chapter 15.  
p. 66

**Thomas says:**

TIMES of spiritual reaction are not uncommon among the people of God. Elijah experienced a great reaction (1 Kings xix.) after the eventful and critical day on Carmel (1 Kings xviii.) So it evidently as with Abraham. The new, remarkable, and in some respects exciting events connected with the rescue of Lot brought about the inevitable swing of the pendulum, as we can easily see in studying this chapter, which is closely connected with the preceding one.  
p. 136

**Waltke says:**

Scene 5 consists of two divine encounters (15:1-6 and 7-21) involving dialogue between the Lord and Abraham and powerful images symbolizing God's presence and promises. The first occurs at night (15:5) as a vision (15:1) and pertains to the promised seed. The second occurs at sundown (15:12), partially in a deep sleep (15:12), and pertains to the promised land.  
p. 238

**Wenham says:**

The limits of this episode are clearly demarcated. Its opening words, “after these things” (v 1), in the present context refer to the victory over the kings recorded in chap. 14; later on in chap. 15, various allusions to the previous chapter confirm that these are the things referred to here. It reaches its climax in vv 18-21, which define the great extent of the promised land and list the ten peoples inhabiting it in Abraham’s lifetime.  
p. 325

**Wiersbe says:**

One who truly fears God, and is obedient to Him, may be in a condition of darkness, and have no light; and he may walk many days and years in that condition . . .”

So wrote the Puritan divine Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679), and the Prophet Isaiah agrees with him: “Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon his God” (Isa. 50:10, NKJV).

At times even the most dedicated Christian feels “in the dark” and wonders why God seems so far away. During the Boxer Rebellion, the China Inland Mission suffered greatly; and its founder, J. Hudson Taylor, said to a friend, “I cannot read; I cannot think; I cannot even pray; but I can trust.” It was a dark time, but God eventually gave light.

Abraham had an experience of what spiritual directors call “the dark night of the soul.”

p. 79

The Lord is going to speak to Abram **SIX TIMES** in this passage:

1. **verse 1**—in speaking about the Lord's personal **PROVISION**,
2. **verses 4 & 5**—talking about the **SEED**,
3. **verse 7**—talking about the **LAND**,
4. **verse 9**—talking about the **COVENANT**,
5. **verses 13-16**—he returns to the subject of the **LAND**, and
6. **verses 18-21**—he continues to speak of the **LAND** as the passage concludes.

This brings us now to a continuation of our study as Abram has just arrived back home again and we will pick up with our lesson in verse 1.

v. 1 After 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.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 1:

After all these things, this word of God came to Abram in a vision: “Don’t be afraid, Abram. I’m your shield. Your reward will be grand!”

The NET Bible translates verse 1:

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

Before God made the covenant, He set aside Abram’s fear and doubt by a word of assurance: **Do not be afraid. I am your Shield.**

“AFTER THIS” refers to the events just described in Genesis 14.

There is always the possibility of a **GREAT REACTION** after a **GREAT ACTION**—a down after a high.

The high of Genesis 14 makes Abram vulnerable in Genesis 15 to **DEPRESSION**.

We saw this graphically illustrated in the **LIFE OF ELIJAH**:

Genesis 18—when he was on Mt. Carmel victorious, and then

Genesis 19—when he is running away lonely and depressed, exhausted in the desert, out of the will of God, requesting that he might die.

He was really ready to **FLICK IT IN!**

## SPEM Prayer

A friend sent me an e-mail that concluded with a list of prayer requests. She said, “Spiritually, I am confused, so pray for understanding. Physically, I am tired, so pray for rest. Emotionally, I am very weak, so pray for strength. Mentally, I am worried, so pray for peace.”

When I saw her later, I told her, “I’ve been SPEM praying for you.” She looked confused, so I told her I was praying for her spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Scripture illustrates God’s care in each of these areas.

*Spiritual:* Jesus prayed for His disciples: “Sanctify them by Your truth” (John 17:17). Truth leads to spiritual understanding, eliminating confusion.

*Physical:* Peter had a physical need—release from jail. His friends prayed—and he got out (Acts 12:1-11). In God’s care we find security and rest (Ps. 16:9).

*Emotional:* Often the psalmists asked God for relief from distress (4:1; 18:6; 107:6-7). He brings hope.

*Mental:* Insight and wisdom are promised for those who cry out to God (Prov. 2:3-6; James 1:5-7). Through prayer and reading His Word, the peace of God can be found.

Are you struggling? Ask God for spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental assistance. —Dave Branon

*What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer! —Scriven*

**Turn your cares into prayers.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Monday, May 7, 2007)

God's revelations to His children are always intimately connected with their needs.

Every new beginning will lead to a higher ground of power and privilege.

The man who administers a defeat to the world becomes a target for its hatred.

In the Genesis 14 we have four kings beat the five kings and the four were then beaten by Abraham and God.

**Someone has said:**

“Cowards are afraid before the battle and heroes always afterwards.”

Naturally Abram is alarmed and apprehensive about what these kings might do to retaliate and in their retaliation shed the blood of his family and servants. He is a stranger in a strange land and it would be normal to be fearful of what might yet happen because of the victory that has just been won.

Our text says:

**“AFTER THIS, THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO ABRAM IN A VISION.”**

We will note that the Word of the Lord that came spoke of **THREE THINGS:**

1. **“DO NOT BE AFRAID, ABRAM.”**

Proverbs 29:25

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God did not give to us a spirit of fearfulness (cowardice) but of power and of love and of self-discipline (good judgment).

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

This is the same message that came to **MARY** in:

Luke 1:30

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

The fear of reprisal on the part of **JEZEBEL** caused **ELIJAH** to run right out of the will of God.

Isaiah 43:1-2

But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

2. **“I AM YOUR SHIELD.”**

Psalm 84:11

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
the Lord bestows favor and honor;  
no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.

Psalm 119:114

You are my refuge and my shield;  
I have put my hope in your word.

We read of **SATAN’S COMPLAINT** in:

Job 1:10

“Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

Psalm 29:11

The Lord gives strength to his people;  
the Lord blesses his people with peace.

Isaiah 54:17

no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord.

Proverbs 2:7-8

He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

“Fear not any new invasions from the outside forces because I am your shield. I will protect and defend you.”

From a human point of view, Abram is naturally concerned. With the danger of war, he is wondering whether God could actually protect him.

“Abram, they are going to have to deal with Me before they can get to you.”

This is in essence the **COMPLAINT OF SATAN** in:

Job 1:10

“Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

3. **“I AM . . . YOUR VERY GREAT REWARD.”**

Abram refused to take any of the spoils of victory from a pagan king. Because of this action, the Lord comes to His wearied and tired servant and says, **“DO NOT BE AFRAID:”**

**“I AM YOUR SHIELD”** and

**“I AM . . . YOUR VERY GREAT REWARD.”**

“The reward which will be yours, Abram will be far more than that which you have lately denied to yourself for My sake.”

“Abram thou hast chosen the good part which shall not be taken from thee. Lot has lost everything, but the Lord is my portion saith my soul therefore will I trust in Him.”

“Prove me now herewith saith the Lord of hosts if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

It is the Lord Himself who is the exceeding great reward.

God never permits His own to lose for honoring Him and seeking His glory. God more than makes it up to him.

#### Psalm 16:5

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;  
you have made my lot secure.

It was Thomas who said, “My Lord and my God. He is yours. In giving Himself, He has given you all that He is. Whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

He is the reward and satisfaction of the lonely heart. It was as if the Lord asked Abram to consider how much he had in having himself. “Come now my child and think even if you were never to have one foot of soil and your tent were to stand silent mid the merry laughter of childish voices yet you would not have left your land in vain for you have Me. Am I not enough? I fill heaven and earth can not I fill one lonely soul. Am not I thy exceeding great reward, able to compensate thee by My friendship to which you are called for any sacrifice that you may have made?”

Our God who is love has given us much and promised us more, but still His best and greatest gift is His own dear self. Our reward, our exceeding great reward. Have you nothing? Is your life bare? Have lover and friend forsaken you? Are you lonely and forsaken of all the companions of earlier and younger days? Well answer this one question more: Do you have God? For if you have you have all love and life, all sweetness and tenderness, all that can satisfy the heart and delight the mind. To have God is to have all though bereft of everything else.

And so the Lord speaks to his weary, tired servant, and tells him in essence that it's true:

**Isaiah 54:17**

No weapon formed against you will prevail . . .

“So you need not fear. I am your shield. I am your exceeding great reward.”

The beauty of living life like this is that in death you are not losing it, you are only going home to Him.

**Hughes says:**

The divine greeting (“Fear not, Abram”) shook him because it revealed that God knew all. Abram shivered in the nakedness of his exposed unbelief. This was grace.

Next Abram, whose foes now extended from the Euphrates to the Nile, heard God say, “I am your shield” against every enemy (cf. Psalm 3:3; 18:2; 28:7; 84:9; 91:4). And then, in reference to Abram’s magnanimous refusal to have any share of the plunder he secured from the four kings, God said, “your reward shall be very great.” All Abram got for his labors was God. That’s all! God was teaching Abram to be satisfied with him alone. This demonstrates, of course, what God desires to give us as we submit to the disciplines of a life of faith. He teaches us to be satisfied with him as enough—our all in all.  
p. 223

**Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:**

**Fear not, Abram**—When the excitement of the enterprise was over, he had become a prey to despondency and terror at the probable revenge that might be meditated against him. To dispel his fear, he was favored with this gracious announcement. Having such a promise, how well did it become him (and all God's people who have the same promise) to dismiss fears, and cast all burdens on the Lord (Ps. 27:3).

p. 26

**Keil & Delitzsch say:**

With the formula "*after these things*," there is introduced a new revelation of the Lord to Abram, which differs from the previous ones in form and substance, and constitutes a new turning point in his life.

p. 209

**They say further:**

The expression "in a vision" applies to the whole chapter. There is no pause anywhere, nor any sign that the vision ceased, or that the action was transferred to the sphere of the senses and of external reality. Consequently the whole process is to be regarded as an internal one. The vision embraces not only vers. 1-4 or 8, but the entire chapter, with this difference merely, that from ver. 12 onwards the ecstasy assumed the form of a prophetic sleep produced by God.

p. 209

**They say still further:**

. . . "*Fear not, Abram: I am a shield to thee, thy reward very much.*" . . . an *info. absol.*, generally used adverbially, but here as an adjective, equivalent to "*thy very great reward.*" The divine promise to be a *shield* to him, that is to say, a protection against all enemies, and a *reward*, i.e. richly to reward his confidence, his ready obedience, stands here, as the opening words "after these things" indicate, in close connection with the previous guidance of Abram.

pp. 210-11

**Lange says:**

The connection of this Section with the preceding events must be carefully observed. The two chapters form essentially one history. Abram had in faith waged war against a fearful and superior power; hence the announcement to him: *I (Jehovah) am thy shield*. He had renounced all claims upon the spoil of war; therefore he has the promise: I am thy exceeding great reward, i.e., reward to the warrior.

p. 409

**MacArthur says:*****The covenant ratified (15:1-21)***

**15:1 *I am your shield.*** God served Abram as his divine protector (cf. Pss. 7:10; 84:9).

p. 35

**McGee says:**

“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield.” My friend, this is lovely; this is wonderful. The record does not tell us this, but let me suggest to you that perhaps during the battle, Abram got in real danger and wondered whether he would come out of it alive. God simply reminds him, “I’m your shield, Abram. I’m your shield.”

“And thy exceeding great reward.” In other words, God says, “You did well to turn down the booty. I am your reward; I intend to reward you.” Oh, what God can do with a man today when he is willing just to believe God and look to Him!

p. 66

**Parker says:**

AFTER Abram had slain the kings he might well feel uneasy as a stranger in a strange land, for how could he tell how many enemies might be stirred up and what reprisals might come upon him? He was just in that state of exhaustion and bewilderment in which a word of comfort is especially precious. There are times when we are not sure whether we have done right or not; we may have been rash; we may have sinned in our anger; and we want a word from heaven to tell us that the deed was good and that our soul is safe.

It was in these circumstances that “*the word of the Lord came unto Abram.*” This is the first time that the expression, “the word of the Lord,” occurs in the Bible.

p. 209

**Phillips says:**

“Fear not Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” “Never mind, Abram,” God said, “you still have Me!” He had proved that already by sending Melchizedek to shield Abram from the snare of Sodom’s king. “I am thy shield,” He said. “Abram, are you worrying about the military situation? Remember, Melchizedek is a king and I am thy shield. Are you worrying about the monetary situation? the spoils of war you have nobly refused? Remember, Melchizedek is a priest and I am your reward. You cannot lose, Abram. You have a king to protect you and a priest to pray for you, and above all you have Me.”

p. 132

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

**After these things** is a transition phrase; what follows is a new incident in Abram’s life (22:1). **the word of the LORD . . . a vision:** The writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds us that God spoke “at various times and in various ways” (1:1). The use of a vision is only one of the means by which God interacts with His servants. This was the third appearance of the Lord to Abram since his arrival in the land of Canaan (the first at 12:7; the second at 13:14-17; ch. 17). **your exceedingly great reward:** The greatest thing in all of life is relationship to God.

p. 30

**Thomas says:**

This is the first occurrence of the Divine “Fear not” which is afterwards found so often as God’s message to His weary and tired servants.  
p. 137

**Waltke says:**

**After this . . .** Although “after this” may refer to all the scenes of Genesis 12-14, it is most closely connected to chapter 14. M. Kline comments appropriately, “Coming on the heels of the battle, the LORD’s word to Abraham (Gen. 15:1) has the character of a royal grant to an officer for faithful military service.”<sup>87</sup> He adds, “The ‘reward’ [*śākār*] is used for the compensation due to those who have conducted a military campaign.”<sup>88</sup> God’s reward takes the place of the spurned booty (14:22-24). Moreover, God’s command, “Do not be afraid,” suggests that Abraham expects reprisal from the kings he defeated in combat.

<sup>87</sup>Kline, *Kingdom*, 216.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 216.

p. 240

**Waltke also says:**

**reward** [*śākār*]. This is probably a term for a mercenary’s pay (see Isa. 40:10; 62:11; Ezek. 29:19). Abraham’s reward for faithful service is much greater than the tarnished booty the king of Sodom offered. Only God can reward Abraham with innumerable offspring and land that others possess. Abraham’s greatest treasure, however, is having the Lord himself as his God (Gen. 17:8; Deut. 10:21).

p. 241

**Wiersbe says:**

God's remedy for Abraham's fear was to remind him who He was: "I am thy shield, and thy exceedingly great reward" (Gen. 15:1). God's I AM is perfectly adequate for man's "I am not." "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). Your life is only as big as your faith, and your faith is only as big as your God. If you spend all your time looking at yourself, you will get discouraged; but if you look to God by faith, you will be encouraged.

God is our shield and our reward, our protection and our provision. Abraham didn't have to worry about another battle because the Lord would protect him. And he didn't need to regret losing the wealth offered him by the King of Sodom because God would reward him in far greater ways. This is the Old Testament equivalent of Matthew 6:33 and Philippians 4:19.

p. 80

**Bush says:**

As Abraham had defeated the kings mentioned in the last chapter with far inferior numbers, he may have thought it not unlikely that, in order to retrieve the disgrace, they might again rally and come upon him with a force which he should be unable to resist. Such an assurance, therefore, as he now received of the divine protection, must have been peculiarly seasonable and consolatory. Whether from a review of past difficulties, or from a prospect of augmented trials, or from an apprehension of disappointed hopes, the most eminent saints are prone at times to give way to discouragements; but God, who watches over the secret fears as well as the outward afflictions of his people, interposes at the needful moment and ministers the support, confidence, and courage which they require.

p. 239

**Candlish says:**

In both cases, also, there is probably an appeal to the past. Thus, when the Word of the Lord says to Abram, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," there is surely a reference to the battle and to the victory—to the fight and to the triumph. Dost thou not know me, Abram? It was I who shielded thee in the recent battle; it was I who rewarded thee in the victory. Didst not thou forego all other recompense for me?

p. 232

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

The questions Abraham raises betray the fact that such a fear lay behind God's first words of comfort. Not only do his questions betray the fear that lay within him, but also the Lord's continued assurances point in the same direction (v. 4). From all appearances around him, Abraham has little to give him hope that God will remain faithful to his word.

p. 24

**Barnhouse says:**

Every day and every hour is a new beginning with God. After failure we can begin afresh with Him. After success we need to begin with Him. It makes no difference what the past has contained of failure or success, the present and future are all with which we need be concerned. The principle of "forgetting what lies behind" (Philippians 3:13) is a divine principle, and every new beginning with God will lead to higher ground of power and privilege.

Abram had won a strategic spiritual and an economic victory. The kings had been defeated, Melchizedek had given him a blessing and Abram had refused material wealth from man. Therefore, he is in special need, and God is the One who supplies all our need.

p. 105

**Henry says:**

2. He cautioned him against being disquieted and confounded: *Fear not, Abram*. Let the sinners in Sion be afraid, but fear not, Abram.

3. He assured him of safety and happiness, that he should for ever be, (1) As safe as God himself could keep him. Not only the God of Israel, but a God to Israel. (2) As happy as God himself could make him: I will be *thy exceedingly great reward*; not only thy rewarder, but thy reward. Abram had generously refused the rewards which the king of Sodom offered him.

p. 30

**Anderson says:**

Isn't that tremendous? After every great moment of action, there's a reaction. Abram was very vulnerable after his military triumph. He'd stepped down from the pinnacle of victory and was about to plunge into the pit of depression when God stopped him in mid-fall. Notice the first thing God told him is: "Do not fear."

p. 71

**Anderson says:**

We can depend on Him, too. Look at what He told Abram next. He said, "I am a shield to you." What does a shield do? It protects you from the weapons of your opponent. In our terminology, God calmed Abram by saying, in essence, "Before your enemies come near you, Abram, they're going to have to deal with Me. I'll be your shield; I'll take care of you. Don't be afraid." God's promise of protection is the best insurance policy anyone can have. As Psalm 84:11 says:

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
The Lord gives grave and glory;  
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

p. 72

**Boice says:**

The text is Genesis 15:1. "After 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.'" In these words, God teaches Abram (and us) that he has power to protect his own—whatever the circumstances.

p. 527

## The Difference Between Courage and Fear

“Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”

—General George Patton, as heard from Chaplain George Metcalf

*James P. Moore, Jr., One Nation Under God: The History of Payer in America (Doubleday, 2005); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

(PreachingToday.com)

(How Great Thou Art: A Daily Devotional by Steve Halliday & William Travis) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright – Steve Halliday & William Travis, 1999.

In this verse we find comfort in all our afflictions and distresses. God’s power is always greater than our problems. The same power that brought a world out of chaos and put the stars in motion, can bring order out of our confusions and light out of our darkness.

When our Savior was in His greatest distress and saw the face of His Father frowning at Him while He hung upon the cross, even in His complaint to Him, He trusted in His power: *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)—that is, “My strong, my strong.” *EI* is a name of power belonging to God; Jesus comforts Himself in God’s power, even while the Son complains of the Father’s frowns.

Follow His pattern and do not forget that power that can scatter the clouds as well as gather them. The psalmist found relief in his distress in the creative power of God.

God’s power is strong comfort against all seductive vices and mighty temptations. Through His power we may arm ourselves and be “strong in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). By this we may conquer principalities and powers as dreadful as hell. By this we may triumph over lusts within, too strong for an arm of flesh. By this the battered walls of our souls may be repaired and the Sons of Anak laid flat. The Power that brought light out of darkness and ordered the chaos and set bounds to the ocean and dried up the Red Sea, can still the turmoil in our spirits and level spiritual Goliaths. There is no resistance He cannot overcome, no stronghold He cannot demolish, no tower He cannot level.

STEPHEN CHARNOCK

(August 29)

**(Strength For Today by John F. MacArthur) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books / Good News. Copyright – John F. MacArthur, 1997.**

The Holy Spirit draws from an infinite supply of strength and power, as Paul indicates in Ephesians 3:20. In verse 16 he had just prayed that the Ephesians would “be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.” Paul was certain that God’s Spirit can do far more in the lives of believers than most of us ever imagine. So many of us don’t get past the phase “to Him who is able,” and with that failure we limit how much the Holy Spirit can do in and through us.

Paul had made more than a theoretical understanding of the Spirit’s infinite power supply—he experienced it firsthand. Even when he was stretched to the limit physically and spiritually, he said, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9). We can’t attribute his inner perseverance to any other source than the Holy Spirit.

No matter how difficult or discouraging our own circumstances become, we have the very same Spirit. If we’re hindered, we don’t have to be frustrated. If we’re puzzled, we don’t have to be in despair. If we’re persecuted, we don’t have to face it alone. If we’re dying from a physical disease, we can be alive in heart and spirit. Our outer person might be exhausted and hard-pressed, but we have the assurance that our inner self is being renewed with fresh strength daily from the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 4:16). (September 10)

**(What Ticks God Off: The Ways We Irritate God & What We Can Do About It by Bruce Bickel & Stan Jantz) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Bruce Bickel & Stan Jantz, 2001.**

There is no evidence that Jonah argued with God about his assignment. He just took off in the opposite direction. Why? As we’ll discuss a little later in this chapter, Jonah didn’t want God to give His blessings and grace to a pagan nation. He didn’t want the Assyrians to respond and repent, and thereby be spared. Everyone knew that the Ninevites were a wicked people. Beyond that, however, it is possible that Jonah had heard the message preached by Amos that Assyria was going to invade and obliterate Israel. He didn’t want to share God’s grace with an enemy that was going to conquer his own nation.

But Jonah didn’t just refuse to budge. He actually fled. So we suspect that Jonah was also a little jumpy. Since Nineveh was known for its merciless violence, Jonah must have feared for his personal safety. The potential for danger probably scared the prophecy out of him.

p. 56

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

He who does not long to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet.  
p. 8

O Lord, how exposed we are! How shall we be secured! To keep ourselves is work too hard for us: only Thou Thyself art able to preserve us in such a world of evils. Spread Thy wings over us, and we, like little chickens, will cower down beneath Thee, and feel ourselves safe!  
p. 645

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 2007.

Our insistence upon discerning what's up ahead is natural, but it is a hindrance to real faith. It's why God constantly encourages us to trust him in the dark (Isaiah 50:10). True faith means resting in who God is. He has charged himself with full responsibility for your eternal happiness, and he stands ready to take over the management of your life. He is wise and good. Trust him with what's ahead.

*No ifs, ands, or buts, dear God. I trust you with the road ahead!*  
(January 2)

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Psalms: Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by A. Maclaren, D.D.) New York, N.Y.: A.C. Armstrong and Son.  
Copyright – 1899.

Thus Jehovah is all the armour and all the refuge of His servant. To trust Him is to have His protection cast around and His power infused for conflict and victory. The end of all life's experience is to reveal Him in these characters, and they have rightly learned its lessons whose song of retrospect begins with "I will love Thee, Jehovah," and pours out at His feet all happy names expressive of His sufficiency and of the singer's rest in possessing Him.  
p. 169

(To Fly Again by Gracia Burnham) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright – Gracia Burnham, 2005.

When Martin and I were in the jungle, we would occasionally pray in the mornings, “God, could you do something special for us today, just to let us know that you haven’t forgotten us? We’re still here in the awful situation—how about encouraging us with something little? We need to know if we’re still on your radar screen.”

And then we would wait to see if anything unusual would happen.

I remember that one day, after such a prayer, an Abu Sayyaf member gave us a Coca-Cola! In this remote tangle of trees and vines and insects, far from civilization, a can with the familiar red label was suddenly dropped into our laps. Actually, the miracle was not so much that a pack of Cokes had arrived in the camp as that the guys didn’t gulp them all down themselves. On this particular day, they actually gave one to the Americans!

As we popped open the top, we quietly breathed, “Thank you, Lord. You remembered us, didn’t you! For this small token of your care, we give you thanks.”

Whether in small ways or large, by subtle means or dramatic ones, God’s love for his children shows through.  
pp. 146-47

(Christ/Life by Ruth Myers) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright – Ruth Myers, 2005.

Paul tells us, “The Christ you have to deal with is not a weak person outside you, but a tremendous power inside you. He was ‘weak’ enough to be crucified, yes, but he lives now by the power of God” (2 Corinthians 13:3–4, Phillips).

p. 116

In summarizing our first verse, the Lord comes to His tired, weary servant and has a **THREE-FOLD PROVISION:**

1. **“DO NOT BE AFRAID,”**
2. **“I AM YOUR SHIELD,”** and
3. **“I AM . . . YOUR VERY GREAT REWARD.”**

### What a Friend We Have in Jesus

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
 All our sins and griefs to bear!  
 What a privilege to carry  
 Everything to God in prayer!  
 O what peace we often forfeit,  
 O what needless pain we bear,  
 All because we do not carry  
 Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?  
 Is there trouble anywhere?  
 We should never be discouraged;  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
 Can we find a friend so faithful  
 Who will all our sorrows share?  
 Jesus knows our every weakness;  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
 Cumbered with a load of care?  
 Precious Savior, still our refuge,  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
 Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
 In His arms He'll take and shield you;  
 You will find a solace there.

("What a Friend We Have in Jesus" by Joseph M. Scriven. *The New Church Hymnal*, Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #302)

v. 2 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”

Peterson paraphrases verse 2:

Abram said, “God, Master, what use are your gifts as long as I’m childless and Eliezer of Damascus is going to inherit everything?”

The NET Bible translates verse 2:

But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what will you give me since I continue to be childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus?”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

When **the LORD** promised **Abram** that his **reward** would be **great**, the patriarch immediately asked **what** he would receive since he was **childless**. This shows his faith. His vision was not blinded by Bera’s offer (14:22-24); **Abram** still had only one hope, the original promise God had given (12:2-3). His concern was expressed by a marvelous word play on his household servant’s origin: this **Eliezer of Damascus . . .** is the possessor-heir . . . “son of possession”) of **my estate . . .** It is as if Abram was stressing to God that “the omen is in the nomen”—a mere **servant** would become his **heir**.

What a **CRUCIAL QUESTION** Abram raises here in verse 2:

**“WHAT CAN YOU GIVE ME SINCE I REMAIN CHILDLESS AND THE ONE WHO WILL INHERIT MY ESTATE IS ELIEZER OF DAMASCUS?”**

Abram needs to realize that the first and greatest gift that God gives is the gift of Himself and all of His resources. This then is followed by the faithful fulfillment of the promises made.

This will cause us to **FOCUS** upon the **PERSON** rather than on the **PROVISION**.

It has been **TEN YEARS** since the promise has been given, and Abram is old and lonely. It's been a long wait and the spiritual loneliness and the disappointed hope is expressed in the phrase:

**“SINCE I REMAIN CHILDLESS.”**

**GOD'S DELAYS ARE NOT DENIALS.** This time is simply intended to bring him nearer and lead him to depend more fully on the **GIVER** rather than the **GIFTS**. Not what God gives so much as what He is.

So we often mistake God and interpret His delays as denials. What a chapter might be written of God's delays. Was not the life of Jesus full of them? From the moment when He tarried behind in the temple to the moment when He abode two days still in the same place where He was instead of hurrying across the Jordan in response to the sad and agonizing treaty of the sisters whom He loved. So He delayed still.

It is the mystery of the art of educating human spirits to the finest temper of which they are capable. What searching of heart, what analyzing of motives what testings of the word of God, what upliftings of soul. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of God signifies. All these are associated with those weary days of waiting which are nevertheless big with spiritual destiny. But such delays are not God's final answer to the soul that trusts Him.

Some men pass through life without much trial because their natures are light and trivial and incapable of bearing much or of profiting by the severe discipline which in the case of others is all needed and will yield a rich recompense after it has had its perfect work.

God will not let anyone of us be tried beyond what we are able to bear, but when He has in hand the nature like Abram's which is capable of the loftest result, we shall not be surprised that the trial is long—continued almost to the last limit of endurance. The patriarch had to wait fifteen years more—making twenty-five years in all—for the first promise and its fulfillment in the birth of Isaac.

Abram is **NOT REBELLIOUS** but he is **NOT HILARIOUS**.

He believes that Eliezer must be his heir and he acquiesces in the purpose of God and only wants light as to the meaning of it. The phrase “behold to me thou hast given no seed” is not a murmuring to God but a pious exclamation of weakness.

It is **NOT A CHALLENGE** to God but an **EXPRESSION OF RESIGNATION**.

Abram is blaming himself for misinterpreting God. “Excuse me for being so disappointed Lord, but I find that all my hopes and ideas have been wrong.”

Beware of being sorry for God's reputation in your particular case. Self-pity is satanic, but pity for God is betrayal of your affections. Here Abram is in the condition not of pitying himself but of pitying God's reputation in himself. He can not understand how God is going to fulfill what He has said.

**Barnhouse says:**

Ten years had elapsed since Abram arrived in the land. The promise of his being made a great nation was becoming dim. He was old and lonely. Both he and Sarah were beyond the age of child-bearing. To all outward appearances his heir was a servant who had been born in his house and was now his steward.

The prospect was not encouraging and Abram spreads it before the Lord.  
p. 107

**Boice says:**

Abram was a man who lived by God's promises. The promises God gave him were not exactly the same as those we have been given to live by today, but the God who gave them is the same and the reason for them is the same. God gives them in order that we might live by trusting him.  
p. 533

**Gangel & Bramer say:**

Abram pleaded with God about the emptiness of his life: **What can you give me since I remain childless?** He had been in Canaan for ten years but still had seen no evidence of the promise of offspring (12:2, 7). Abram had already made plans for his estate and, in accordance with the laws of his time, determined to bequeath his inheritance to **Eliezer of Damascus . . . a servant in my household.**  
p. 135

**Hughes says:**

This is the first time Abram speaks to God, his first dialogue.  
p. 223

**Keil & Delitzsch say:**

Of what avail are all my possessions, wealth, and power, since I have no child, and the heir of my house is Eliezer the Damascene?  
p. 211

**MacArthur says:**

*I go childless.* In response to God's encouragement and admonition (v. 1), Abram showed what nagged at him. How could God's promise of many descendants (13:16) and of being a great nation (12:2) come about when he had no children? *Eliezer of Damascus.* To Abram, God's promise had stalled; so adoption of a servant as the male heir—a well-known contemporary Mesopotamian custom—was the best officially recognizable arrangement to make it come to pass, humanly speaking.  
p. 35

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

According to long-standing custom, a man who was childless would adopt someone, perhaps a slave, to be his principal heir. If the man later had a child, then the natural child would replace the adopted son as the principal heir. Similar laws were part of the legal codes of the Near East, including the famed Code of Hammurabi of Babylon. We read of **Eliezer of Damascus** only here, but he had the honor of being Abram's heir because Abram and Sarai had no child of their own. Some have wondered if Eliezer is also the unnamed servant of Abraham who went on the quest for a wife for Isaac (Gen. 2:5; 24:2).  
pp. 30-31

**Thomas says:**

Mark his disappointed hope. "Seeing I go childless." Ten years had elapsed since his entrance into Canaan, and, in spite of the promise of a seed, there was no sign of fulfillment. Sarah and he were so much older, and everything seemed against even the possibility of the realization of God's promises.  
p. 137

Waltke says:

**remain.** The Hebrew here means “walking, going” and depicts life as a journey; the same verb is used in 12:1, 4, 5, 9; 13:3. Faith is living in imagination in God’s word when the situation by sight seems impossible.  
p. 241

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Thus you undeserving mortals dream that my Lord is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must needs draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy. Think you that He will submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart, He spurns all dictation, and maintains his sovereignty of action.  
p. 493

(Perfect Peace by Lloyd John Ogilvie) Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House.  
Copyright — Lloyd John Ogilvie, 2001.

There is unity of purpose in the peace of God: the oneness shared by the persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no discord or disagreement between them, only mutual glorification. And there’s no panic in heaven. This is what we mean when we talk about the peace of God. For us, it means accepting the complete control of the one who is in control. There is no real peace without a firm conviction of the sovereignty of God!  
p. 13

The answer lies in the fact that the peace of Jesus Christ was not based on His feelings but on the clear conviction that God is sovereign and all-powerful. In addition, Jesus lived with confidence in God’s timely intervention. How else could He offer peace on the night before His crucifixion knowing the trials He would go through as He became the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the whole world!  
p. 72

(Each New Day by Corrie ten Boom) Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell.  
Copyright – Corrie ten Boom, 1977, 2003.

Somebody said to me: “When I worry I go to the mirror and say to myself, ‘This tremendous thing which is worrying me is beyond a solution. It is especially too hard for Jesus Christ to handle.’ After I have said that, I smile and I am ashamed.”

p. 95

v. 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 3:

Abram continued, “See, you’ve given me no children, and now a mere house servant is going to get it all.”

The NET Bible translates verse 3:

Abram added, “Since you have not given me a descendant, then look, one born in my house will be my heir!”

Lord, time has run out and now it seems, from a human point of view, that I am going to have no offspring and therefore one of my house-servants shall have to become my heir.

The whole impact of this passage ought to teach us that delayed fulfillment must not obscure God and His promises.

**JOSEPH** was convinced that God had sovereignly placed the cupbearer and the baker in prison with him so that from this encounter he would be set free.

Joseph interpreted the two dreams of the cupbearer and the baker and then he said to the cupbearer:

Genesis 40:14-15

But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

Then you have:

Genesis 40:23

The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

We learn that **GOD'S PLAN** for Joseph is to remain in **PRISON TWO MORE YEARS** before God is ready to move in accomplishing His purposes in Joseph's life.

**Anderson says:**

There's a lesson in this that Abram needed to learn as much as you and I do. God's delay in a believer's life is *not* equal to His denial. Just because God delays in fulfilling a promise to us doesn't mean He is denying us that promise. Delay can cause some of the greatest things to happen in the education of the human spirit. God does, as Solomon points out in Ecclesiastes 3:11, make “every thing beautiful in its time” (KJV).

p. 75

**Wiersbe says:**

One of the basic lessons in “the school of faith” is: *God’s will must be fulfilled in God’s way and in God’s time.* God did not expect Abraham and Sarah to figure out how to have an heir; all He asked was that they be available so He could accomplish His purposes in and through them. What Abraham and Sarah did not realize was that God was waiting for them to be “as good as dead” so that God alone would receive the power and glory.  
p. 81

v. 4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 4:

Then God’s Message came: “Don’t worry, he won’t be your heir; a son from your body will be your heir.”

The NET Bible translates verse 4:

But look, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but instead a son who comes from your own body will be your heir.”

This is now the **SECOND OF SIX MESSAGES** from the Lord to Abram in this passage:

1. Had to do with **PROVISION** and now
2. Has to do with the **PROMISED SEED.**

The Lord is very direct here in making it quite clear:

**“THIS MAN WILL NOT BE YOUR HEIR, BUT [in contrast] A SON COMING FROM YOUR OWN BODY WILL BE YOUR HEIR.”**

He **DOES NOT EVEN MENTION** the name **“Eliezer of Damascus”** at this point.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

But **the LORD** strongly answered, **This man** (not even using Eliezer's name) **will not be your heir**. Instead **a son coming from Abram's own body** would be his heir.

We have again the phrase:

**“THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO HIM.”**

And the message that comes to Abram is to correct his faulty conclusions of verses 2 & 3:

**“THIS MAN [ELIEZER] WILL NOT BE YOUR HEIR.”**

Then the Lord tells him **POSITIVELY** how it is going to come about:

**“BUT A SON COMING FROM YOUR OWN BODY WILL BE YOUR HEIR.”**

“Abram, it might look impossible from your point of view, but there is nothing impossible with God.”

Luke 1:37

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

**Kidner says:**

. . . the emphatic expression *out of thine own bowels* (AV, RV) now settled a legitimate doubt for Abram. A further question, whether this son could possibly be his through Sarai, would be the next challenge to his faith, worked out in the heart-searchings of chapters 16 and 17.  
p. 123

**McGee says:**

God is very practical when a man will be practical with Him. He says, “I am going to give *you* a son, Abram. I am going to give you a son.”  
p. 66

**Waltke says:**

**Then the word of the Lord came.** The English “then” does not capture the Hebrew emphatic particle *hinnēh* (“look”), which aims to involve the audience in the narrative.  
p. 241

(Captured by Grace *No One is Beyond the Reach of a Loving God* by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2006.

John and Mary Newton longed for a family. For years they waited, trying to be patient, trying to conceive a child. Finally, after they had been married twenty-four years, the Lord sent them Elizabeth and Eliza in a very touching way. Mary Newton had lost a sister and a brother to tuberculosis, a deadly disease in that era. Each left behind one young daughter, and these became John and Mary Newton's adopted children.

Eliza, who was twelve when she joined the family, was often ill. The summer before her fifteenth birthday, Mary took her to Southampton, where the ocean air was thought to be healthier. Her husband wrote an encouraging letter, comparing the Southampton waters to the Pool of Bethesda in the Gospels. Maybe the Lord would work a healing miracle in Eliza's life.

But six weeks brought no improvement. Three weeks after returning to London with her mother, Eliza was dead.

Her grieving adoptive father prepared a little memorial book for the girl he had awaited for so long. In it he wrote: "If we know and trust Him . . . He chooses better for us than we can for ourselves . . . but now I can praise and adore Him for . . . His plan. I not only can bow . . . to His sovereignty, but I admire His wisdom and goodness, and can say from my heart, He has done all things well."<sup>7</sup>

7. John Newton, *Letters and Reflections to My Adopted Daughters*, comp. Jody Moreen (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2005), 105.  
p. 161

v. 5 He took him outside and said, “Look at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 5:

Then he took him outside and said, “Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Count your descendants! You’re going to have a big family, Abram!”

The NET Bible translates verse 5:

He took him outside and said, “Gaze into the sky and count the stars—if you are able to count them!” Then he said to him, “So will your descendants be.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

God then showed Abram **the stars**, pointing out that Abram’s **offspring** would be just as innumerable . . . The word by which God created the stars would also guarantee Abram’s seed.

God takes Abram outside for an **OBJECT LESSON**.

After the Lord spoke the word about the seed coming from his own body, He then gave him a little glimpse of the multitude of his descendants who will spring from the seed. In asking him to count the stars if he is able and that this is just a little picture of the number of his descendants.

What a glorious insight we have in these verses as to how God deals with His tried and troubled servant.

Genesis 13:16

I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.

The Lord has now given him **TWO ILLUSTRATIONS**. From the:

1. **DUST** and now
2. **“STARS”** in the heavens.

The magnitude of his descendants are beyond human comprehension.

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

The appeal to the number of the stars of “the heavens” recalls Abraham’s own words in 14:22, where his hope for reward was based solely on the “Creator of heaven and earth.” If the Lord was the Creator of the great multitude of stars, he was able to give Abraham an equal number of descendants (cf. 22:17; 26:4; Ex. 32:13; Dt. 1:10; 28:62). God’s faithfulness in the past was the basis for Abraham’s trust in the future.

p. 24

**Boice says:**

God pointed Abram up rather than down. Earlier, when he had talked about the number of his descendants, God had said, “They are going to be as numerous as the dust of the earth.” That probably had bearing upon the promise God had made concerning the land. God said, “I’m going to give you this land. Everywhere you walk—east, north, south, west—that land is going to be yours, and your descendants are going to be like the dust of that land.” That made sense. But now there is a greater promise and a far better way of living. God says, “Look up! Look at the stars! Don’t look down!”

One of our problem is that we are always looking down. Essentially, we are looking at ourselves, and that leads to doubt. We look at ourselves and say, “I don’t see how I can do that. I don’t see how I can believe what God is promising.” If we were in Abram’s shoes, we would say, “I don’t see how I am going to have children at my age.” The problem is that we are looking at ourselves. We are not the one who gives the promises. God is. So we need to stop looking down and start looking up. We need to have our minds stretched by God’s greatness.

pp. 537-38

**Henry says:**

This that is born in thy house *shall not be thy heir*, as thou *own bowels shall be thy heir*. 2. To affect him the more with this promise, he took him out, and showed him the stars, and then tells him, *So shall thy seed be . . .*

p. 30

**McGee says:**

This is remarkable. First God said to him that his offspring would be as numberless as the sand on the seashore, and now He says they will be as numberless as the stars in heaven. Abram could not number the stars. He could see approximately four thousand, but there were probably over fifty thousand in that area where he was looking. Abram couldn’t number his offspring, and you couldn’t do it today.

p. 66

**Stigers says:**

Yahweh makes it clear that Abram's earlier arrangements respecting Eliezer are not His plans for Abram. God's remarks are directed toward that word of promise by which He seeks to lift Abram above the sense of deprivation so prominent in his thoughts. What follows is given as an enlargement of an earlier promise, "I will make of you a great nation" (12:2). Yahweh voids the adoption and then makes specific the interpretation of 12:2 which Abram should long since have done. But Abram's demand for an heir is not necessarily an exhibition of unbelief, otherwise there would not follow Yahweh's explicit amplification of the earlier promise of 12:2, but a rebuke. What is revealed here is a lack of understanding as to the outworking of the promise, in the implied question "When will the heir appear?"

p. 153

**Waltke says:**

The representation of offspring like the uncountable stars is not just an amazing promise but an assurance of God's creative and sovereign power.

p. 242

**Wenham says:**

"Look" suggests a long look . . .

p. 329

So in verses 4 & 5 the **LORD'S SECOND MESSAGE** has to do with the **SEED**:

1. **"[it is] coming from your own body"** and
2. The descendants are going to be so great, they are going to be like the **"STARS"** in the heavens.

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

**Peterson paraphrases verse 6:**

And he believed! Believed God! God declared him “Set-Right-with-God.”

**The NET Bible translates verse 6:**

Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord considered his response of faith proof of genuine loyalty.

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

**Abram believed** (lit., “believed in”) **the LORD and He credited . . . to him . . . righteousness.** This foundational truth is repeated three times in the New Testament (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23) to show that righteousness is reckoned in return for faith.

Genesis 15:6 provides an important note, but it does not pinpoint Abram’s conversion. That occurred years earlier when he left Ur. (The form of the Heb. word for “believed” shows that his faith did *not* begin after the events recorded in vv. 1-5.) Abram’s faith is recorded here because it is foundational for making the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant did not give Abram redemption; it was a covenant made with Abram who had already believed and to whom righteousness had already been imputed. The Bible clearly teaches that in all ages imputed righteousness (i.e., salvation) comes by faith.

It is remarkable the number of **FIRST OCCURRENCES** in this chapter. There are at least **FIVE**:

1. **“the word of the Lord came,”**
2. **“Do not be afraid,”**
3. **“believed,”**
4. **“count,”** and
5. **“RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

By his readiness to perform the commands of the Lord, we have practical proof that he believed what God had said.

In verse 6 we have **ABRAM'S AMEN TO THE LORD** because faith takes God at His word:

**GOD** equals the **OBJECT OF FAITH.**

**HIS WORD** the **GROUND OF FAITH.**

**HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS** the **RESULT OF FAITH.**

God would give Abram a son because he would trust God to do it.

There can be positively nothing on Abram's part but only faith, faith alone. On that starry night he has nothing whatsoever to do. Nothing whatsoever to suffer. Nothing whatsoever to sacrifice. Nothing whatsoever to undertake or promise. He simply believed the Lord, takes God at His word, and closes with Him in His free promise.

God speaks, Abram believes, and all is settled and all is sure.

He stayed himself upon the Lord.

What a glorious picture this is of what happens in the New Testament when the Apostle Paul speaks of the fact that the man who is made or declared righteous lived by faith. The single condition for eternal life is just simply to take God at His word, to believe that the gift of His Son is an adequate sacrifice to deal with man's sin. To the man or woman who believes God, it is reckoned to him as righteousness.

### John 3:14-15

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.

### **Barnhouse says:**

This is the first mention of justification in the Bible. Whatever translation is used, the meaning is the same. He “imputed” it; He “reckoned it”; He “credited” it. It was all God's doing. He is the keeper of the eternal records. He is the Judge before whom all cases are tried. He is the One who condemns or justifies. And these two words—“condemn” and “justify”—are opposites. No one who is condemned has been justified, and no one who has been justified can be condemned (Romans 8:1).

p. 110

**Boice says:**

Genesis 15:6 is one of the most important verses, if not *the* most important verse, in the entire Bible, for it tells for the first time how a sinful man or woman may become right with God. In ourselves we are not right with God. We are alienated from him by our sinful natures and by deliberate sinful choices. We are under God's wrath, and apart from him we are destined to perish miserably. If it is possible that we can become right with God once again—as this verse says we can—thereby passing from sin to holiness and from wrath to blessing, this is clearly great news, and the verse that tells us how this can happen is of supreme importance.

We may put it another way. Genesis 15:6 says that “Abram believed the LORD” and that “he [that is, the Lord] credited it to him as righteousness.”

p. 546

**Boice says further:**

Year ago, when I was just a boy learning my first lessons in the Bible, I was influenced greatly by Donald Grey Barnhouse, one of my predecessors at Tenth Presbyterian Church. I remember many of the stories he told to illumine Bible truths. One of them was about a young man who had been brought up in a New York City slum but had risen to fame and fortune in the theatrical field through his songwriting talents. He bought a yacht with his new wealth, and although he did not know the first thing about yachting, he hired men to sail the boat for him and assumed the title “Captain.” Then he invited his mother, who had come to the United States from eastern Europe and had more common sense than her son, to go sailing with him.

The young man seated his mother in the stern of his yacht and went below to change into his captain's uniform. When he appeared on deck a few moments later, he was resplendent. His uniform was white, and it was liberally decorated with gold braids and brass buttons. The young man struck an appropriate pose and said, “Look, Momma, I'm a captain!”

The old woman calmly surveyed him, then, like one used to deflating the ego of her bumptious children, answered, “Sonny, by you, you is a captain, and by me, you is a captain, but by captains, you is no captain.” After telling this story, Barnhouse would apply it to good works and our lack of standing before God. He would say, “By you, you're good; by me, you're good; but by God, you're no good. In his sight you have no goodness at all.”

pp. 553-54

**Boice says still further:**

By this time you will have understood that the only thing required of the dying Israelites was that they believe God's word about the snake and look to it as he commanded them. So also are we to look to Christ for salvation.

We are to do what Charles Haddon Spurgeon, that great Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century, did the day he was saved. He was only a boy at the time, but he had gone to a service in a Primitive Methodist chapel where a layman, not the regular minister, was preaching. The man had little learning and little to say. But the result was beneficial, for he stuck closely to his text, which was: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22 KJV). As Spurgeon remembered it, the man did not even pronounce the words properly, but that did not matter. The layman launched into his text, and his message went like this: "My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It just says, 'Look.' Now lookin' don't take a great deal of pain. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just, 'Look.' Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand pounds a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, 'Look unto *Me*.' Ay! Many of you are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Look to Christ. The text says, 'Look unto *Me*.'"

At this point he noticed Spurgeon and—fixing his eyes on him as if he knew the struggle going on in the boy's heart—continued, "Young man, you look miserable, and you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text." Then lifting up his hands as only a good Primitive Methodist could do, he shouted, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live." And Spurgeon did.

p. 559

**Gangel & Bramer say:**

Abram's response in this verse forms the centerpiece of the gospel. Here we see the first use of the verb *believe* in the Bible. It teaches us what faith means—believing God. So Paul could say that Abram was the father of all who believe (Rom. 4:11). Some interpreters even suggest that Genesis 15:6 records Abram's conversion experience.

Genesis 15:6 is so important that the New Testament writers quoted it several times. It appears in whole or in part three times in the fourth chapter of Romans (4:3, 22-23), as well as in Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23. In Romans 4:23-25, Abram's faith is compared with our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. In other words, his faith in what God had told him up to that point is placed on the same level as our faith in what God has told us and revealed to us through Christ.

p. 136

**Hartley says:**

The narrator defines Abram's relationship to God: **Abram believed** Yahweh, and Yahweh **credited it to him as righteous**. "Believe in" means "put trust in, rely on." Here it means that Abram put his full trust in God. In expressing his complaint to God Abram demonstrated that trust. Instead of letting his bitter frustration at God's apparent failure to keep his promise fester inside him, he voiced his distress when God came to him. Thus he preempted it from eroding his faith in God and in the promise of a son.

p. 156

**Hughes says:**

So it was with Abram: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac” (v. 17a). Abraham was saved by faith alone—a faith that was not alone—a faith that works!

We conclude this study with two penetrating questions. Have you rested your faith on God the Son, Jesus Christ, alone for your salvation? That is the first question. Are you trusting your works or Christ? Now if you answer, “I am trusting Christ alone,” then the second question is, has your faith produced works? Is your faith real enough that it has changed your life? These are salutary questions because you are saved by faith alone. But if it is true faith, it is faith that is not alone but a faith that works.

Salvation is in no other name but Jesus. Have you believed and trusted him alone for your salvation? And if you say you have, has your life changed? May this landmark text dominate your understanding of God’s revelation about faith and righteousness because it comes from his Word.  
p. 228

**MacArthur says:**

*believed . . . accounted . . . for righteousness.* The apostle Paul quoted these words as an illustration of faith in contrast to works (Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). Abram was regenerated by faith.  
p. 35

**McGee says:**

This is one of the greatest statements in the Scriptures: “And he believed in the LORD.” What this means is that Abram said amen to God. God has said, “I will do this for you,” and Abram says to God, “I believe You. Amen. I believe it.” And that was counted to him for righteousness.  
p. 67

**Parker says:**

And now comes perhaps the greatest word yet spoken in human history. I wish we could speak it in the right tone! This is the word, “And Abram BELIEVED”! This is the first time the word *believed* occurs in the Bible. How wonderful this chapter is in the matter of first uses of words! It seems to be a chapter of beginnings. *Believed*,—what a history opens in this one word! The moment Abram believed, he was truly born again. We may see here some of the great meanings of the word. Paul says of Abram that “against hope he believed in hope,” and “that he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” Here, then, we may study the word at the fountain head. “Believed” means *supported, sustained, strengthened*; Abram nourished and nurtured himself in God; Abram hid his life and his future in this promise, as a child might hide or nestle in a mother’s breast. *That is faith.*

p. 211

**Phillips says:**

A God who can create galaxies and nebulae and countless worlds can certainly give Abram a countless seed. So we read “he believed in the LORD; and he counted it unto him for righteousness.” Abram received a bigger bonus than ever he had dared to think. He became the heir of eternal salvation. We should note that Abram was counted righteous, not when he believed the promise that took him out of Ur of the Chaldees, but when he believed the promise regarding the Seed. For, in all ages, salvation ultimately comes to rest in the person of Christ. He is the Seed. It is not mere faith that saves—but *faith in Christ*.

p. 133

**Thomas says:**

Now comes a wonderful change and a definite progress upwards in Abraham’s spiritual experience.

There was a prompt response to the Divine revelation. “Abraham believed.” He had faith before, but now it was prominent and emphatic, a clearer, stronger, fuller trust in God.

p. 138

**Thomas says further:**

God Himself is the Object of his faith, the Word of God is the ground of his faith, and righteousness is the result of his faith.  
p. 139

**Thomas says still further:**

This passage is noteworthy for its first occurrences of remarkable and subsequently well-known words and phrases: (1) “The word of the Lord came”; (2) “Fear not”; (3) “Believed”; (4) “Counted”; (5) “Righteousness.”  
p. 139

**Wenham says:**

. . . “he believed” can mean “he relied on someone, gave credence to a message or considered it to be true, trusted in someone” . . .  
p. 329

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

May infinite wisdom cure us of the madness of self-confidence.  
p. 153

Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace. “My sins are many, but oh! it is nothing to Jesus to take them all away. The weight of my guilt presses me down as a giant’s foot would crush a worm, but it is no more than a grain of dust to Him, because He has already borne its curse in His own body on the tree.  
p. 175

(Enough Faith: You've Already Got What It Takes to Make a Difference by Dr. Ken Hutcherson) Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah. Copyright – Ken Hutcherson, 2006.

I can remember some early Sunday mornings when I just lay there and prayed, “Lord, I am so tired. I just don’t want to get up now. Can’t I just get someone else to do the preaching today?” But Jesus just wouldn’t let me get away with not planting that mustard seed of faith. “Son, He told me, “just sit up, put your feet on the floor, and get out of bed. It’s time to do some planting!”

When I obey and get my body out of bed, something amazing happens. The next thing I know, I’m on my way to church, have a big smile on my face, and I’m singing praises. I just can’t wait to get to church and preach the Word of God. When I finally do make it to church, I still have that smile.

“Well, Hutch,” you say, “that’s all well and good, but how much faith does it take just to get out of bed?” If you’re among those who are thinking that, then congratulations! You may have just stumbled onto the most important part of this teaching about mustard-seed faith.

See, planting a mustard seed of faith doesn’t mean that you need a lot of faith. It simply means that you do those simple things God calls you to do, knowing that He rewards people who have faith in Him.

But how can you start planting positive seeds of faith? You can start by doing some simple things like . . .

- . . . rolling out of bed when God says to.
- . . . keeping your appointment with God in your Bible reading and prayer times.
- . . . responding to the Lord in obedience when you feel like procrastinating.
- . . . believing in and acting on God’s promises instead of focusing on your circumstances.
- . . . resting in His care and control instead of complaining.
- . . . trusting in the fact that God’s got your back, and He will make something good out of even your worst situations.
- . . . refusing to be angry and bitter at someone who has offended you—your spouse, your child, your boss, your estranged friend—and start praying for God’s best for that person.
- . . . putting a stop to worries about the future, choosing instead to thank God that He’s working, sometimes behind the scenes, to bring you to that place in life He has for you.
- . . . refusing to be intimidated by what people will think of you, and start proclaiming the name of Jesus!

Now let me ask you, how much faith does it take to do simple things like these? Not much at all, really. These are things any of us Christians can do, even if we don’t consider ourselves a “giant of the faith.” They’re all simple, tiny seeds of faith that we can plant, starting today! *And hear me,*

*my friend, we have no idea—not the slightest inkling—of how God can use those simple acts of faith and obedience to shake up the world and impact eternity.*

In my case, instead of just lying around and being negative because I didn't feel like getting out of bed, I did something very simple: By just getting out of bed and doing what I've been called and prepared to do, I planted a small seed of faith. And because I did, God blessed me and the people He's put in my spiritual care.

It's incredible what God can do when we plant just a tiny little seed of faith. It amazes me how He can take that little seed—once it begins sending down its tiny roots—and make big changes in my life and in those around me.

A big God can shake the world through just a tiny particle of faith.  
pp. 36–38

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light: He is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that He *is* light; nor that He gives salvation, but that He *is* salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God, has all covenant blessings in his possession.

p. 337

**HE DIED FOR ME!**

William and Mary Tanner were crossing the railroad tracks when it happened. Mary's foot slipped and wedged itself between the rail and the wooden crosswalk. She tried frantically to pull her foot free as the sound of an approaching train was heard. There were but seconds left as the express came rushing toward her around a curve. Will Tanner pulled on her foot, desperately trying to free her.

As the train came closer and its whistle screamed and brakes shrieked, Will held her in his arms. While people shuddered in horror, the train thundered over them. One witness said that just before the engine hit them, he heard the brave man cry, "I'll stay with you, Mary!" That is great love!

**(From *Our Daily Bread*, Wednesday, April 9, 2003)**

**Romans 5:8** (Phillips)

Yet the proof of God's amazing love is this. While we were sinners Christ died for us.

**John 15:13**

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

v. 7 He 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.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 7:

God continued, “I’m the same God who brought you from Ur of the Chaldees and gave you this land to own.”

The NET Bible translates verse 7:

The Lord said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”

Here in verse 7 is the **THIRD TIME** that the **LORD SPEAKS**:

1. verse 1—he speaks about **PERSONAL PROVISION** for Abram,
2. verses 4 & 5—he speaks about the **SEED**, and
3. verse 7—he speaks about the **LAND**.

Make no mistake about it. I’m the One:

**“WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT OF UR OF THE CHALDEANS.”**

**MY PURPOSE** in doing that was:

**“TO GIVE YOU THIS LAND TO TAKE POSSESSION OF IT.”**

He reminds Abram that the One Who is speaking is the Lord and that He has been faithful to bring Abram **“OUT OF UR OF THE CHALDEANS”** with the purpose to give him the land that he might possess it.

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Psalms-Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by  
A. Maclaren, D.D.) New York, N.Y.: A.C. Armstrong and Son.  
Copyright – 1899.

The sacred words which Jesus made His own on the cross, and which have been the last utterance of so many saints, were meant by the psalmist to apply to life, not to death. He laid his spirit as a precious deposit in God's hand, assured that He was able to keep that which was committed to Him. Often had he done this before, and now he does it once more. Petitions pass into surrender. Resignation as well as confidence speaks. To lay one's life in God's hand is to leave the disposal of it to Him, and such absolute submission must come as the calm close and incipient reward of every cry for deliverance. Trust should not be hard to those who can remember.  
pp. 292-93

**(Why Did This Happen To Me? Finding God's Strength Through Life's Hurts and Heartaches by Ray Pritchard) Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers. Copyright – Ray Pritchard, 2003.**

Joseph was saying, “Though your motives were bad, God’s motives were good.” *And though it took years and years for God’s purposes to become clear, in the end, Joseph saw the hand of God behind everything that had happened to him.*

Think about the implications of that statement:

At just the right moment, Joseph’s brothers threw him into the cistern.

At just the right moment, the Midianites came along.

At just the right moment, Joseph was sold to Potiphar.

At just the right moment, Potiphar’s wife falsely accused him.

At just the right moment, he met the baker and the cupbearer.

At just the right moment, the cupbearer remembered Joseph.

At just the right moment, pharaoh called for Joseph.

At just the right moment, Joseph was promoted to prime minister.

At just the right moment, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt.

At just the right moment, the brothers met Joseph.

At just the right moment, Jacob’s family moved to Egypt.

At just the right moment, pharaoh offered Joseph’s

Family the land of Goshen.

At just the right moment, they settled there and prospered.

All of these events happened at “just the right moment” and in “just the right way” so the right people would be in the right place so that in the end everything would come out the way God had ordained in the beginning. *God never violated anyone’s free will, yet everything happened as He had planned.* That’s the providence of God in action. That’s also what Romans 8:28 means when it says that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). pp. 35–36

v. 8 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

Peterson paraphrases verse 8:

Abram said, “Master God, how am I to know this, that it will all be mine?”

The NET Bible translates verse 8:

But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, by what can I know that I am to possess it?”

This is the **SECOND TIME** in the chapter that Abram has used the term:

**“O SOVEREIGN LORD.”**

He used it:

1. verse 2—“O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless?”

Here he was confronting the Lord with a **QUESTION** that had to do with the **SEED**.

2. verse 8—“O SOVEREIGN LORD, HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I WILL GAIN POSSESSION OF IT?”

Here the **ISSUE** and the **QUESTION** has to do with the **LAND**.

Habakkuk 2:3

For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

Lamentations 3:26

it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Psalms 27:13-14

I am still confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.  
Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Romans 8:25

But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

It is not easy to watch with God or to wait for Him. The orbit of His providence is so vast. The stages of His progress are so wide apart. He holds on His way through the ages. We tire in a few short hours. And when His dealings with us perplexing and mysterious the heart that had boasted its unwavering loyalty begins to grow faint with misgivings and to question, when shall we be able to trust absolutely and not be afraid.

This question is not an expression of doubt but desire for confirmation or sealing of the promise, which went beyond human thought and conception.

We are dealing with a problem of assurance, not a problem of unbelief.

If I believe the Lord and His Word I may thereafter humbly hope to have some pledge of his promises.

We certainly have that wonderful pledge in the covenant of salvation recorded for us in:

**Romans 8:16**

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

**Ephesians 1:13**

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

**Hughes says:**

Prompted by God's declaration, Abram naturally inquired about the land: "But he said, 'O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?'" (v. 8). It was the question of a believing heart, and consistent with the strongest faith that God, of course, knew full well was in Abram. In a later similar situation, when Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, asked the same question when he was told by Gabriel that he and his barren Elizabeth would have a son—"How shall I know this?" (Luke 1:18)—he was struck dumb for his unbelief. Abram's question was more in the attitude of "I believe; help my unbelief!" (cf. Mark 9:24).  
p. 230

**Keil & Delitzsch say:**

Abram's question, "*Whereby shall I know that I shall take possession of it (the land)?*" was not an expression of doubt, but of desire for the confirmation or sealing of a promise, which transcended human thought and conception. To gratify this desire, God commanded him to make preparation for the conclusion of a covenant.  
p. 213

Waltke says:

**how can I know.** The question could be interpreted as unbelief, but that understanding would not fit the narrator's evaluation that Abraham trusts God (15:6). More likely, Abraham's request for a sign is motivated by faith (see 15:6; cf. Isa. 7:10-14). Complain and faith are not antithetical; complaint is based on taking God seriously.

p. 243

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

*“Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you.”*

—Isaiah xxx. 18.

GOD often DELAYS IN ANSWERING PRAYER. We have several instances of this in sacred Scripture. Jacob did not get the blessing from the angel until near the dawn of day—he had to wrestle all night for it. The poor woman of Syrophenicia was answered not a word for a long while. Paul besought the Lord *thrice* that “the thorn in the flesh” might be taken from him, and he received no assurance that it should be taken away, but instead thereof a promise that God's grace should be sufficient for him. If thou hast been knocking at the gate of mercy, and hast received no answer, shall I tell thee why the mighty Maker hath not opened the door and let thee in? Our Father has reasons peculiar to Himself for thus keeping us waiting. Sometimes it is to show His power and His sovereignty, that men may know that Jehovah has a right to give or to withhold. More frequently the delay is for our profit. Thou art perhaps kept waiting in order that thy desires may be more fervent. God knows that delay will quicken and increase desire, and that if He keeps thee waiting thou wilt see thy necessity more clearly, and wilt seek more earnestly; and that thou wilt prize the mercy all the more for its long tarrying. There may also be something wrong in thee which has need to be removed, before the joy of the Lord is given. Perhaps thy views of the Gospel plan are confused, or thou mayest be placing some little reliance on thyself, instead of trusting simply and entirely to the Lord Jesus. Or, God makes thee tarry awhile that He may the more fully display the riches of His grace to thee at last. Thy prayers are all filed in heaven, and if not immediately answered they are certainly not forgotten, but in a little while shall be fulfilled to thy delight and satisfaction. Let not despair make thee silent, but continue instant in earnest supplication.

p. 688

v. 9 So 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.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 9:

God said, “Bring me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, and a dove and a young pigeon.”

The NET Bible translates verse 9:

The Lord said to him, “Take for me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

In the solemn ceremony in which **the LORD** made a binding covenant with **Abram**, God assured him of the ultimate fulfillment of His promises . . . God also declared that there would be a long 400-year period of enslavement for Abram’s descendants . . .

Here in verse 9 is the **FOURTH TIME THE LORD SPEAKS** in the passage:

1. verse 1—he speaks about **PERSONAL PROVISION** for Abram,
2. verses 4 & 5—he speaks about the **SEED**,
3. verse 7—he speaks about the **LAND**, and
4. verse 9—he speaks about the **COVENANT**.

Because of Abram’s question, the **LORD RESPONDS** by initiating an **UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT**—which means that God and God alone is obligating Himself to fulfill these promises.

It is wonderful to know that **OUR ETERNAL SALVATION** is also an **UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT.**

John 10:28-29

and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

The Lord asks for:

**THREE ANIMALS** and

**TWO BIRDS.**

1. **"A HEIFER,"**
2. **"A GOAT,"** and
3. **"A RAM."**

Each of them are to be **"THREE YEARS OLD."**

Then bring along:

4. **"A DOVE"** and
5. **"A YOUNG PIGEON."**

The Lord is commanding Abram to go get one of every species of animals suitable for sacrifice.

The Lord is preparing to enter into a covenant relationship with Abram His servant.

**v.10 Abram 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.**

**Peterson paraphrases verse 10:**

He brought all these animals to him, split them down the middle, and laid the halves opposite each other. But he didn't split the birds.

**The NET Bible translates verse 10:**

So Abram took all these for him and then cut them in two and placed each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds in half.

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

Obeying God's instructions, **Abram** severed in **half** (v. 10) three animals—a **heifer, a goat, and a ram** (v. 9)—and also brought **a dove and a young pigeon**.

**Leviticus 1:6**

He is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.

**Leviticus 1:17**

He shall tear it open by the wings, not severing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is on the fire on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

In the sacrifice, the **BIRDS** were not divided but **PLACED ON THE FIRE WHOLE.**

The **DIVISION OF THE ANIMALS REPRESENT THE TWO PARTIES INVOLVED.**

It was the custom that when a covenant was made that the two parties passed through the pieces and in the process of passing through the pieces were saying in essence: “let what has happened to these animals happen to me if I fail in the keeping of my promise.”

### Jeremiah 34:18-19

The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf,

It is worthy to note that the only part Abram had in this entire transaction described here was simply putting to death the sacrifice. It is important to see this. Every one of these animals and these birds is a type and picture of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ:

The **“HEIFER”** has to do with the **CLEANSING OF SALVATION,**

The **“RAM”** the **ATONEMENT,**

The **“GOAT”** was the **CARRYING AWAY OF OUR SINS** into the wilderness, and

The **“PIGEON”** and the **TURTLEDOVE** was the keeping power of almighty God in **SANCTIFICATION.**

It is a marvelous picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who had to be slain by the hand of the sinner. But beyond that, like Abram, the sinner had absolutely nothing to do at all in the procuring of redemption.

**The songwriter says:**

O God in heaven the guilt is mine.  
I crucified your son divine!!

I am reminded of:

**Isaiah 53:4-6**

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Abram made a passageway between the parts of the animals and then took each of the birds and laid them opposite each other without cutting them.

**MacArthur says:**

The sign of ancient covenants often involved the cutting in half of animals, so that the pledging parties could walk between them, affirming that the same should happen to them if they broke the covenant . . .

p. 35

v.11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

Peterson paraphrases verse 11:

Vultures swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram scared them off.

The NET Bible translates verse 11:

When birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

Just then sudden horror must have come on **Abram**, for unclean **birds of prey** swooped **down on** the offering animals—obviously an evil omen. God's announcement of Israel's enslavement (vv. 13-14) clarified the meaning of the attacking birds. The word **mistreated** . . . is the same word used in Exodus 1:11-12 to describe Egypt's oppression of Israel. Egypt, like birds of prey, opposed the covenant, but ultimately the covenant will be fulfilled. Later, in Moses' day when the Israelites were in Egypt, they could count the years and see that **400 years** had elapsed (from the time of Jacob's entry into Egypt in 1876 B.C. . . . and their time of deliverance from slavery was at hand . . .

In this verse we have the experience of silence and suspense as Abram has been obedient to prepare for the covenant which God is going to make with him.

The birds seem to represent those which would desire to render ineffective the covenant between Abram and his descendants and his God.

They are the birds of:

**EGYPT,**

**CANAAN,**

**GREECE,**

**ROME,** and

**ISLAM.**

Even today the birds of the **ARAB** nation are trying to take Israel from their possession.

The believer will never be frightened by difficulties when he knows God has given the inheritance.

**GOD PROMISES,**

**GOD BLESSES,**

**GOD GIVES,**

**GOD GUARANTEES,** and

**GOD ASSURES.**

**Hughes says:**

The assault by the carrion-eating birds of prey and Abram's driving them away foreshadowed the attacks that would come upon Abram's offspring from the nations and God's protection (both of which will be described in part in God's following covenant promises).

p. 231

v.12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 12:

As the sun went down a deep sleep overcame Abram and then a sense of dread, dark and heavy.

The NET Bible translates verse 12:

When the sun went down, Abram fell sound asleep. Then great terror overwhelmed him.

Just like the surgeon has to use the **ANESTHETIC** to get the patient out of the way, so God administers His own anesthetic for Abram as God enters in to this unconditional covenant that involves the **SEED** and the **LAND**.

It is as though God said:

“Now listen Abram, you must get out of the way first. You have nothing to do whatsoever with the part that is to follow. This is something I am going to do all by Myself, and I would like to have you get out of the picture completely.”

So God gave Abram an anesthetic. Put him to sleep and gave him a bad dream while he was asleep. We read a horror or **“DARKNESS”** fell upon him.

We recognize immediately the picture of the sinner before almighty God. The Lord is now to demonstrate His wonderful salvation by His matchless grace.

He says as it were, first of all, you must be out of the picture entirely. You have not one single thing you can do or should do. You can not lift a finger toward your own salvation. You are totally dead in trespasses and sin, helpless and paralyzed and blind, therefore you must be set aside first or you will spoil the entire transaction.

There is nothing the sinner can do at all. Essentially he cannot even believe until he has been quickened by the Holy Spirit to believe.

Salvation is the work of God and so the Lord tells Abram to get out of the picture entirely. He sets aside the sinner and puts him under the darkness of condemnation and under the awful blackness of the horror of the wrath of almighty God.

#### Anderson says:

We can compare Abram to a patient, prepped for surgery and lying on a hospital operating table. If you have ever been in that position, you know that the doctors don't allow anyone to remain wide-eyed, alert, and awake on that table for very long. Before even the smallest incision is made, an anesthesiologist is called in. Prior to surgery, one of the first things the doctor has to do is put his patient to sleep. If we were destined for the scalpel and we stayed awake during the operation, we'd become our own worst enemies. We'd be telling the surgeon how to do the surgery, so the first thing any physician has to do is get his patient out of the way before helping him. God did the same thing to Abram. He put Abram under "anesthetic" for awhile. The Lord wanted him out of the way because Abram could have no part in sealing the covenant; that was left up to the Master Surgeon—God alone.

p. 81

**Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:**

The patriarch did not pass between the sacrifice and the reason was that in this transaction he was bound to nothing. He asked a sign, and God was pleased to give him a sign, by which, according to Eastern ideas, He bound Himself. In like manner God has entered into covenant with us; and in the glory of the only begotten Son, who passed through between God and us, all who believe have, like Abram, a sign or pledge in the gift of the Spirit, whereby they may know that they shall inherit the heavenly Canaan.  
p. 27

**MacArthur says:**

God put him to sleep, because the covenant did not involve any promise on Abram's part; therefore, he could not walk through the pieces as a pledge . . .  
p. 35

**McGee says:**

That is exactly what took place over nineteen hundred years ago when God sent His Son. God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. And the Son agreed to come to the earth and die for the sins of the world—your sin and mine—that whosoever would believe in Him (simply accept His gift) might not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). I wasn't even there nineteen hundred years ago to make a contract, but God the Father and God the Son were there, and the Son went to the cross, and He died for my sins. I was paralyzed with sin. I could not promise anything, and you couldn't either.

Abram did not promise anything either. Suppose that God had said to Abram, "Abram if you will just promise to say your prayers every night, I am going to do this for you." And suppose Abram forgot to pray one night. The contract is shot—it's broken—and therefore God does not need to make His part good. But God said that He would do His part, and He is asking man to do just one thing: to say amen to Him—that is, to believe Him. You are to believe God and believe what He has done. My friend, to believe God is salvation.

p. 68

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

Abram fell into the same sort of **deep sleep** that God placed on Adam (2:21). Abram was still aware of events around him. His trancelike state allowed him to remember these events for the rest of his life. **horror . . . darkness:** These two words give great emphasis to the meaning: “an overwhelming dark horror.” This kind of reaction to the indescribable holiness of the Lord (Ps. 113:4-6; Is. 6:3; 40:25) is natural; Abram was about to experience the presence of the Almighty. This was a moment of profound dread and holy awe.

p. 31

**(Making Sense Out Of Suffering by Peter Kreeft) New York, N.Y.:Walker and Company. Copyright – Peter Kreeft, 1986.**

In the unforgettable line of Corrie ten Boom from the depths of a Nazi death camp, “No matter how deep our darkness, He is deeper still.”

p. 237

Matthew 27:45-46

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

v.13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 13:

God said to Abram, “Know this: your descendants will live as outsiders in a land not theirs; they’ll be enslaved and beaten down for 400 years.”

The NET Bible translates verse 13:

Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years.”

The **INHERITANCE** can only be reached through **SUFFERING**:

Romans 8:17

and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

The way to blessing was **DEATH** and **RESURRECTION**:

John 12:24-25

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.

The Lord speaks here of the fact that his:

**“DESCENDANTS WILL BE STRANGERS”** in the land that is not theirs.

This is referring to:

**BONDAGE** in the land of Egypt and

they will be **ENSLAVED** or oppressed there for a period of **“FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.”**

Beginning with verse 13 and running down through verse 16 we have the longest of the statements of the Lord in the institution of this covenant.

This is **STATEMENT #5** and it has to do primarily with the **LAND**.

**MacArthur says:**

*four hundred years.* This represents an approximated number which is precisely 430 years (cf. Ex. 12:40).  
pp. 35-36

v.14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

Peterson paraphrases verse 14:

Then I'll punish their slave masters; your offspring will march out of there loaded with plunder.

The NET Bible translates verse 14:

But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve. Afterward they will come out with many possessions.

The Lord's judgment will fall on the land of Egypt even as it did in the plagues and after the plagues. They came out of bondage heading toward the land of Canaan with many possessions.

Radmacher & Allen say:

**I will judge:** God fulfilled this prophecy in the ten plagues (Ex. 7-11). The Israelites of the Exodus acquired **great possessions** when they plundered the Egyptians (Ex. 12:31-36).

p. 31

v.15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.

Peterson paraphrases verse 15:

But not you; you'll have a long and full life and die a good and peaceful death.

The NET Bible translates verse 15:

But as for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.

The Lord first describes what is going to happen to Abram's descendants and then lets him know about the end of his own tour of duty here on earth.

He promises him that he shall go to his "FATHERS IN PEACE."

He is not buried in Canaan but he is with his "FATHERS" before him in Sheol.

This coincides with the teaching of the APOSTLE PAUL in the New Testament:

"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and His person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music;" and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In Thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below.

p. 199

Wait awhile, and that weary head shall wear the crown of glory, and that hand of labour shall grasp the palm branch of victory. Lament not thy troubles, but rather rejoice that ere long thou wilt be where "there shall be neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

p. 298

## Billy and Ruth Graham in Old Age

In August of 2006, *Newsweek* magazine profiled the lives of Ruth and Billy Graham—not their historic evangelistic crusades and international impact, but their life as an elderly couple approaching their final chapters on earth. One thing that shone brilliantly through the pages of the article was the incredible quality of their marriage. “At night we have time together,” Billy says. “We pray together and read the Bible together every night. It’s a wonderful period of life for both of us. We’ve never had a love like we do now—we feel each other’s hearts.”

Of course, Billy is still Billy, and his gift of evangelism also sparkled throughout the story. “I think about heaven a great deal,” he said. “I think about the failures in my life in the past, but know they have been covered by the blood of Christ. And that gives me a great sense of confidence. I have a certainty about eternity that is a wonderful thing, and I thank God for giving me that certainty. I do not fear death. I may fear a little bit about the process, but not death itself, because I think the moment that my spirit leaves this body, I will be in the presence of the Lord.”

*Jon Meacham, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” Newsweek (8-14-06), p. 43;  
submitted by Ted De Haas, Bedford, Iowa*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

[PreachingToday.com](http://PreachingToday.com)

(Still Lookin' by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services Company. Copyright – Joe Kreger (poetry) and Doane Agricultural Services Company (book), 2000.

### *The Vigil*

He sits there on the front porch  
and gazes down the street,  
looking for a friendly face  
or someone just to greet.

Faded eyes and silver stubble  
decorate a furrowed face –  
weather-beaten old survivor,  
now just occupying space.

A mind so full of wisdom  
that he can't articulate,  
feeble body cased in shabby clothes,  
so worn and out of date.

A builder of this nation,  
a soldier of her wars  
now dozes in the sunlight,  
labored breathing, raspy snores.

A husband and a father,  
who always did his part,  
now rouses from his slumber  
and wakes up with a start.

He resumes again his vigil,  
this intermittent sleeper.  
Fearlessly, he watches  
for the coming of the Reaper.  
p. 125

(Perfect Peace by Lloyd John Ogilvie) Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House.  
Copyright — Lloyd John Ogilvie, 2001.

True peace cannot be broken by life's storms. Untainted by care, untouched by the highest surges of sorrow, unstained by unforgiven sin, true peace is indefatigable and actually grows deeper with the challenges and trials of life.

Do you have this kind of pervasive peace? Do I?

p. 9

(31 Days Toward Overcoming Adversity by Joni Eareckson Tada) Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers. Copyright — Joni Eareckson Tada, 2006.

Please pray with me: *Father, though our lives here on earth are brief, the way can seem long sometimes. Our bodies become weary, our loads feel heavy, and our strength and hope can fail us just when we need it most. Father; You are the One who promises new strength to the weary. You are the One who lifts our head, and draws us toward the light and beauty just over the horizon. Keep us running strong and steady and true. Refocus our eyes on the Lord Jesus, the One who endured so much for us, and waits for us at the finish line. In His strong name, amen.*

p. 44

v.16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 16:

Not until the fourth generation will your descendants return here; sin is still a thriving business among the Amorites.”

The NET Bible translates verse 16:

In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

God is just, and wished to permit **the sin of the Amorites** to be **full** before He would judge them . . . God would tolerate their sins until Israel under Joshua conquered Palestine. Thus the fulfillment of the promises to Abram involves a retributive judgment on the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Abram’s seed would get the land—but not one hour before absolute justice required it. God had much to do before fulfilling His promise—including disciplining His nation to make it fit for receiving the promise. Abram’s seeing this in advance was horrible—like watching birds of prey.

The national tenure of the land is based on a righteous course and if it is continued, the nation will be blessed in its possessions. The Amorites, when Israel entered the land, the Hittites, the Perizzites would eventually experience God’s judgment but not after God’s long-suffering.

God could see them heading in the wrong way!!

2 Chronicles 7:14

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

**ISRAEL**, too, experienced God's judgment in being taken off the land and in bondage to **ASSYRIA** in 721 B.C.

**JUDAH** experienced the same thing being carried into captivity in **BABYLON** in 586 B. C.

That which is described here is **GOD'S JUDGMENT** finally falling on wicked people.

In verses 13-16 we have a **SEVEN-FOLD PROPHECY** given by the Lord and how accurately and faithfully it is fulfilled to the slightest detail:

1. the descendants of Abram will be "strangers in a country not their own,"
2. in that strange land, they would be servants or slaves,
3. they will be afflicted for 400 years,
4. the nation which they served, God would judge,
5. they would come out of Egypt with great substance or possessions,
6. Abram will be spared and will die in peace, and
7. the "FOURTH GENERATION" will return to Canaan.

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

**iniquity of the Amorites:** In a sense, the Lord was granting a stay of execution for the peoples of Canaan (12:5). He would allow their sin to reach a critical level—the word “iniquity” (Heb. *‘awôn*) also speaks of “guilt.” The command of God to take the land from the Canaanite peoples (Deut. 20) would come only when their iniquity was **complete**.

p. 31

**Waltke says:**

*Amorites* (see 10:16; 14:13) here functions as a synecdoche for the ten nations listed in 15:19-21. God will dispossess them in favor of his elect in full agreement with his moral governance of the world. Indeed, it is not until the nations become totally saturated with iniquity that God dispossesses them (Lev. 18:24-28; 20:23). So also he does not send the Flood until the earth is fully corrupt (Gen. 6:5, 12), and he does not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah until he has satisfied himself that not even a quorum of righteous are left in the city. Israel’s conquest and settlement of Canaan is based on God’s absolute justice, not on naked aggression. Later, when Israel’s iniquities have become full, God will drive even his elect nation from the land . . .

p. 244

v.17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

Peterson paraphrases verse 17:

When the sun was down and it was dark, a smoking firepot and a flaming torch moved between the split carcasses.

The NET Bible translates verse 17:

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking firepot with a flaming torch passed between the animal parts.

This is a picture of what Abram saw in his **DEEP PROPHETIC SLEEP.**

Hebrews 6:17

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

God's contract with Abram is a custom of the day which is for the two parties to pass between the two halves of the sacrifice. Here only the smoking furnace and the flaming torch, which are figures of God's presence, go through the pieces. God is the One doing the promising. Salvation is not a joint venture. God has made unconditional promises of salvation to anyone who will trust Christ. When Christ called out on the cross "It is finished," God had gone through again on the behalf of man. Not two halves—He Himself was the sacrifice.

The Lord calls upon Himself the same fate should He not keep faith with Abram. To assure the Lord fulfillment, He did undergo the cleaving on the cross of Calvary. By this agreement the covenant then was made with God Himself. It was made on behalf of Abram, but He would not dare let Abram have anything to do with it. It would not work if he had.

So he swore by himself saying, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, multiplying I will multiply thee.” So after He had patiently endured He obtained the promise for men verily swear by the greater in an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein, God willing, more abundantly to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His council, confirmed it by an oath. That immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us.

While angels stood in admiration and adoration and awe He came down, down, down passed all the greater stars and blazing planets until He stopped upon infinitesimally small clod of dirt we call the earth.

Here this great eternal God took up His abode in a microscopic human cell and planted Himself in the womb of a virgin, Jewish mother and dwelt under the pulsating heart of a human mother for nine whole months gathering His nourishment from humanity whom He came to save.

At the end of that He was born through blood and tears, and pain, a weeping babe and had to be nursed at a human breast. He had to learn to walk and talk and yet veiled within Him, for the purpose of redeeming the very ones who were to put Him to death, was infinite God.

Then He went and worked with His hands. Like unto us in all things sin excepted. Despised, rejected, laughed at, scorned, mocked, reviled, connived against, schemed against until at last they take Him to Calvary, the Son of God, and stretch Him out upon the cross. Nail His hands and his feet between two thieves. Piercing thorns upon His head. His lips pinched. Great sorrow that is breaking His heart. Sin which God had laid upon Him. Not His own sin but ours. Eyes stare in consternation at the awful prospect of God Himself plunging Him into the darkness where sinners ought to be until at last His body covered like a robe of crimson with His own precious blood, writhing on the cross, He give Himself in death that we might live.

**Candlish says:**

“Between the pieces” of the slaughtered victims, “a smoking furnace and a burning lamp” are seen to pass. These are surely the visible emblems of the great God; corresponding to what was afterwards known as the Shechinah, or the GLORY OF THE LORD. In passing through, they probably consumed the pieces, as was usual on other similar occasions (Judges vi. 21, xiii. 19, 20). In the acceptance of the sacrifice, the glory of God is seen; and the heart of him who is thus an eye-witness of his majesty is reassured respecting “the power and coming of the Lord.”

p. 243

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

Only God made that journey in the symbols of smoke and fire. The fulfillment of the promise of God to Abram, the Abrahamic covenant, is as sure as is the ongoing life of the Lord . . .

p. 32

**Waltke says:**

Since only God walks between the pieces, the covenant is based on Abram’s past faithfulness (see 6:18). To judge from ancient Near Eastern texts and Jer. 34:18, God is invoking a curse upon himself if he does not keep his covenant.

pp. 244-45

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

Then after sunset God revealed Himself in connection with the image of an oven (**smoking fire pot**) and a **torch**, two elements that were connected with sacrificial ritual in the ancient world. These images are part of the “burning” motif that describes God’s zeal and judgment in the world. Fire represents the consuming, cleansing zeal of Yahweh as well as His unapproachable holiness, which are interrelated . . . In the **darkness** . . . **Abram** saw nothing else in the vision except these fiery elements that **passed between the pieces** of the slaughtered animals. Thus the holy God was zealous to judge the nations and to fulfill His covenantal promises to Israel. He came down and **made** (lit, “cut”) a formal treaty (**a covenant**) **with Abram** (the Abrahamic Covenant). Since God could “swear” (confirm the covenant) by none greater, “He swore by Himself” . . . In other words this was a unilateral covenant. So its promises are absolutely sure.

v.18 On 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—

**Peterson paraphrases verse 18:**

That’s when God made a covenant with Abram: “I’m giving this land to your children, from the Nile River in Egypt to the River Euphrates in Assyria—

**The NET Bible translates verse 18:**

That day the Lord made a covenant with Abram: “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River—

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

God even specified the geographical boundaries of Israel’s land—**from the river of Egypt** (Wadi el-Arish, not the Nile River) **to the great river, the Euphrates**. Israel has never possessed this land in its entirety, but she will when Christ returns to reign as Messiah.

Here we have the account of what has been happening in the previous verses. It was the Lord Who made a covenant with Abram, telling him what He was going to do about the land and the borders of it.

This is the beginning of the **LORD'S SIXTH AND FINAL STATEMENT** here in verse 18 and it runs down to the conclusion of the passage in verse 21.

The **FOCUS** of this **SIXTH STATEMENT** is upon the **LAND**.

In **SUMMARIZING ALL SIX** of them:

1. **PERSONAL PROVISION** for Abram,
2. **SEED**,
3. **LAND**,
4. **COVENANT**,
5. spelling out of the **LAND** promises in the covenant, and
6. the final statements with regard to the **LAND**.

**Henry says:**

1. A rehearsal of the grant. God's promises are God's gifts, and are so to be accounted. The possession is as sure, in due time, as if it were now actually delivered to them. What God has promised is as sure as if it were already done; hence, it is said, *He that believes hath everlasting life* (John iii. 36), for he shall as surely go to heaven as if he were there already.

p. 31

v.19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

v.20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,

v.21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

**Peterson paraphrases verse 19-21:**

the country of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,  
Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim,  
Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

**The NET Bible translates verse 19-21:**

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

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

The Canaanite tribes listed . . . were dispossessed later in the Conquest.

For Abram God’s message was clear: in spite of the prospects of death and suffering (enslavement in bondage), his descendants would receive the promises, for God assured it. So Israel could be encouraged by this at the Exodus as well as in subsequent times of distress, even during the Babylonian Captivity. God’s solemn covenant assures the Chosen People of the ultimate fulfillment of His promises in spite of their times of death and suffering.

These verses simply **DESCRIBE THE EXTENT OF THE LAND** as it is delineated in terms of the people who occupy it. People profoundly affected by the descendants of Abram in the future.

**CONCLUSION:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We need not fear, for the Lord is our powerful Protector and Provider.

LESSON #2: The Lord is our Shield and exceeding Great Reward.

LESSON #3: The sovereign Lord is the One Who is always faithful to fulfill His promises.

LESSON #4: “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21).

LESSON #5: “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

LESSON #6: The Lord’s delays are not His denials.

LESSON #7: “He has made everything beautiful in its time . . .” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

LESSON #8: The single condition for blessing to Abram and salvation to us is described in verse 6: “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

LESSON #9: The covenant made with Abram is unconditional for it is only the Lord Who is going between the pieces.

LESSON #10: Salvation is a complete act of God. We have nothing to do with it at all.

LESSON #11: A certain time of judgment will come when iniquity is full.

LESSON #12: “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass”  
(1 Thessalonians 5:24).

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

IT is a happy way of soothing sorrow when we can feel—“HE careth for *me*.” Christian! do not dishonour your religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon your Lord. You are staggering beneath a weight which your Father would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden, would be to Him but as the small dust of the balance. Nothing is so sweet as to

“Lie passive in God’s hands,  
And know no will but His.”

O child of suffering, be thou patient; God has not passed thee over in His providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows, will also furnish *you* with what you need. Sit not down in despair; hope on, hope ever. Take up the arms of faith against a sea of trouble, and your opposition shall yet end your distresses. *There is* One who careth for you. His eye is fixed on you, His heart beats with pity for your woe, and his hand omnipotent shall yet bring you the needed help. The darkest cloud shall scatter itself in showers of mercy. The blackest gloom shall give place to the morning. He, if thou art one of His family, will bind up thy wounds, and heal thy broken heart. Doubt not His grace because of thy tribulation, but believe that He loveth thee as much in seasons of trouble as in times of happiness. What a serene and quite life might you lead if you would leave providing to the God of providence! With a little oil in the cruse, and a handful of meal in the barrel, Elijah outlived the famine, and you will do the same. If God cares for you, why need you care too? Can you trust Him for your soul, and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens, He has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! have done with fretful care, and leave all thy concerns in the hand of a gracious God.

p. 12

(Fénelon: Selected Writings – The Classics of Western Spirituality Edited and translated by Chad Helms) Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. Copyright – Chad Helms, 2006.

A general way to use time well is to accustom yourself to living in a continual dependence on God's Spirit, receiving from moment to moment whatever pleases him to give us, consulting him when in doubt in occasions where we have to make a decision on the spot, having recourse to him in weakness when virtue falls as in a faint, invoking him and raising ourselves up to him when our heart, being led on by material objects, sees itself imperceptibly conducted off of its path, and being caught in a state of forgetfulness and remoteness from God.

Happy is that Christian who, through a sincere renouncing of himself, holds himself in the hands of his Creator, ready to do anything that he would wish and who would never tire of saying to him a hundred times a day: "Lord, what would you have me do?"<sup>18</sup> "Teach me to do thy will for thou art my God."<sup>19</sup> You will show that you are my God by teaching me, and that I am your creation by obeying you. In whose hands, great God, would I be better off than in yours?

p. 178

(Making Sense Out Of Suffering by Peter Kreeft) New York, N.Y.:Walker and Company. Copyright – Peter Kreeft, 1986.

The way to perfect joy is incredibly simple. It is simply to die—to die to self-will and self-regard—to say to God, "Thy will be done," and mean it. To put God first, to consecrate everything—*everything*—to Him.

p. 259

(The Education of Little Tree by Forrest Carter) Albuquerque, NM:  
University of New Mexico Press. Copyright - Forrest Carter, 1976.

It was in the middle of the day, which is the best time to hand fish. The sun hits the middle of the creek and the fish move back under the banks to lie in the cool and doze.

This is when you lay down on the creek bank and ease your hands into the water and feel for the fish holes. When you find one, you bring your hands in easy and slow, until you feel the fish. If you are patient, you can rub your hands along the sides of the fish and he will lie in the water while you rub him.

Then you take one hold behind his head, the other on his tail, and lift him out of the water. It takes some time to learn.

This day, Granpa was laying on the bank and had already pulled a catfish out of the water. I couldn't find a fish hole, so I went a ways down the bank. I lay down and eased my hands into the water, feeling for a fish hole. I heard a sound right by me. It was a dry rustle that started slow and got faster until it made a whirring noise.

I turned my head toward the sound. It was a rattlesnake. He was coiled to strike, his head in the air, and looking down on me, not six inches from my face. I froze still and couldn't move. He was bigger around than my leg and I could see ripples moving under his dry skin. He was mad. Me and the snake stared at each other. He was flicking out his tongue—nearly in my face—and his eyes was slitted—red and mean.

The end of his tail began to flutter faster and faster; making the whirring sound get higher. Then his head, shaped like a big V, begun to weave just a little, back and forth, for he was deciding what part of my face to hit. I knew he was about to strike me but I couldn't move.

A shadow fell on the ground over me and the snake. I hadn't heard him coming at all but I knew it was Granpa. Soft and easy, like he was remarking about the weather, Granpa said, "Don't turn yer head. Don't move, Little Tree. Don't blink yer eyes." Which I didn't. The snake raised his head higher, getting ready to hit me. I thought he would not stop raising up.

Then, of a sudden, Granpa's big hand come between my face and the snake's head. The hand stayed there. The rattler drew up higher. He begun to hiss, and rattled a solid whirring sound. If Granpa had moved his hand . . . or flinched, the snake would have hit me square in the face. I knew it too.

But he didn't. The hand stayed steady as a rock. I could see the big veins on the back of Granpa's hand. There was beads of sweat standing out too, shining against the copper skin. There wasn't a tremble nor a shake in the hand.

The rattler struck, fast and hard. He hit Granpa's hand like a bullet; but the hand never moved at all. I saw the needle fangs bury up in the meat as the rattler's jaws took up half his hand.

Granpa moved his other hand, and grabbed the rattler behind the head, and he squeezed. The rattler come up off the ground and wrapped himself around and around Granpa's arm. He thrashed at Granpa's head with his rattling end, and beat him in the face with it. But Granpa wouldn't turn loose. He choked that snake to death with one hand, until I heard the crack of backbone. Then he threwed him on the ground.

Granpa set down and whipped out his long knife. He reached over and cut big slashes in his hand where the snake had bit. Blood was running over his hand and down his arm. I crawled over to Granpa . . . for I was weak as dishwater, and didn't think I could walk. I pulled myself to standing by holding onto Granpa's shoulder. He was sucking the blood out of the knife slash and spitting it on the ground. I didn't know what to do, so I said, "Thankee, Granpa." Granpa looked at me and grinned. He had blood smeared over his mouth and face.

pp. 108-110