

Genesis 15:2—20 - God Patiently Helps Abram Overcome His Doubts And Fears

Memory Verse

Genesis 15:6 NLT—*Justification by faith*

And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

Revision

Genesis 15:1 NKJV

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

Previously we saw that Abram was afraid because of the real threat of retaliation from the brutal four kings and their armies from the north that Abram and his 318 servants had just miraculously defeated. Abram was also wondering if it was really worth having given up so much for God, after handing the massive amount of wealth recaptured from the four kings from the north, over to the king of Sodom (see Genesis chapter 14).

So God came to him and said, **“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward”** (Genesis 15:1b NKJV). This is exactly what Abram needed to hear. Why? Firstly, Abram understood that God knew exactly how he felt—scared, vulnerable, alone, and poor. Secondly, God reassured Abram with two “I AM” statements: “I Am your shield”, and “I Am... your exceedingly great reward”. Abram needed a shield—the promise of physical protection from the four kings from the north, that they would not come and attack him. Also, Abram needed to be reminded of what he already had—God Himself. God is reminding Abram that, although he was worse off materially or financially, he was so much better off spiritually: *Why? Because Abram could now enjoy, to a much greater extent, the presence of God, because he wasn't so distracted and enamoured by temporary or material things.* Remember, we are never truly content until we are willing to give up all temporary and worldly things so we can experience the true joy of walking in fellowship with God, and so enjoy the presence of God, as we learn to trust in, rely on, and obey Him completely.

We also saw that God shields us from: our enemies, satan, temptation, and bitterness and unforgiveness.

Introduction

What we will see as we continue in Genesis chapter 15 is a beautiful example of the two-way nature of prayer: It's raw, it's honest, it's childlike, and it demonstrates dependance on God. God is big enough to cope with our complaining, outbursts, fears, and doubts as we come to Him when times are hard.

Firstly, God speaks to us through His word:

- He provides for us by giving us many great and precious promises that we can choose to put our trust in when we need them.
- He comforts us by letting us know just how much He loves us.
- He supports us by telling us that He knows us better than we know ourselves, and therefore knows exactly how to help us.

Secondly, we respond to God. God wants believers to:

- Let Him know exactly how we feel, to pour out our hearts to Him—be completely honest about our brokenness and helplessness as we come to God,
- Remember that we are His children, with no strength of our own, and completely dependant on Him.
- Cry out to Him, asking for the strength to believe in His promises, and so experience God's power, love, peace, contentment, joy, and grace in our daily lives.

Remember, satan comes to us and says that too be happy: you need more money, a boyfriend, a spouse, that new car, a better house, better health, a better job etc. However, God says to us, "You already have everything you need—Me—I am your *exceedingly great reward!* Come to Me, draw near to me, so we can experience everlasting love together. Everything else that you need, the temporary things, I will give to you as you need them, when they will actually be a blessing to you and not a curse, so don't stress about them. Just learn to trust Me, depend on Me, and enjoy Me."

Outline (Genesis 15:2-20)

1. Abram's open and honest communication (prayer) with God (v 2-3)
2. God reassures Abram by confirming the promise that he and Sarah would have a child (vs 4-5)
3. Abram chooses to trust God's promise that he and Sarah would have a son, and one of his descendants would be the promised Messiah (v 6)
4. Abram needs more reassurance, so God makes a covenant with Abram (vs 7-20)

Genesis 15:1-20 NKJV

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

² But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

⁶ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

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

⁸ And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

⁹ So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ¹¹ And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

¹⁸ On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:

“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

1. Abram's open and honest communication with God

Genesis 15:2-3 NKJV

But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”

v 2 **Lord GOD, what will You give me... Look, You have given me no offspring:** This may sound like Abram is complaining, whining and getting down about not having his own children like many barren married couples do today. This is understandable, as God has put the desire to bear and raise children into each one of us, and it can be very difficult for some married couples to cope in this situation. However, Abram has a good reason to ask.

v 2 **And the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus... indeed one born in my house is my heir:** Eliezer's parents were servants of Abram. Eliezer grew up, and as was the custom of those days, remained a slave in Abram's household. Eliezer was either the highest ranking or oldest (or both) slave in Abram's household. Abram is pointing out to God that, if he died then, everything he had would go to one of his servants, as he had no child of his own.

Abram gets his priorities right—he knows what he needs the most—a Saviour to save him from his sins

Again, Abram's prayer goes much deeper than just a desire for kids. Why? Firstly, because Abram is reminding God of a promise that He had already given to him.

Genesis 12:2 NKJV

I will make you a great nation...

Genesis 12:7 NKJV

...to your descendants [literally *seed* or *descendant*, singular] I will give this land

Genesis 13:15-16 NKJV

...for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. ¹⁶ And I will make your descendants [literally *seed* or *descendant*, singular] as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.

But why is Abram so obsessed with this one promise. God has promised him protection and reward, yet Abram won't be content until he gets an assurance from God that God will keep His promise to give Abram and Sarah a son. Why is this one promise so important to Abram? Why not the promise of receiving the entire land of Canaan? Why not the promise of God being his exceedingly great reward and so full contentment and satisfaction? The answer is simple. *God had promised Abram that one of his descendants would be none other than the Messiah or Saviour Himself, the One who would save the world from their sins by Himself becoming the sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.*

Galatians 3:8-9 NLT

What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in His sight [Justified, Just-if-I'd never sinned, forgiven] because of their faith. **God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."** ⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

So Abram recognised that his greatest need was for God to save him from his sins—from being separated from God for eternity in the Lake of Fire (Hell).

Revelation 20:10, 14-15

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.

Therefore, Abram knew that his greatest need, what he absolutely could not do without, was a Saviour, the One whom God had promised would be a perfect man and would die in the place of sinful mankind. Abram knew that, if he and Sarah did not have a son, then there would be no Saviour born in the future, and when he died he would be forever separated from God. *The Bible makes it very clear that Abram knew exactly what God was promising him—not just many descendants, but in particular one descendant through whom "all the peoples on earth would be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3). Consider the following passage from the New Testament.

Galatians 3:16 AMP

Now the promises (covenants, agreements) were decreed and made to Abraham and his **Seed** (his Offspring, his Heir). He [God] does not say, And to seeds (descendants, heirs), as if referring to many persons, but, And to your **Seed** (your Descendant, your Heir), **obviously referring to one individual, Who is [none other than] Christ (the Messiah)**. [Genesis 13:15; 17:8.]

We will come back to this next time.

Not doubting God's promises, but desiring them

Genesis 15:2-3 NKJV

But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

What we see here is Abram not *doubting* God's promise of the coming Saviour, but earnestly *desiring* it. We should all be the same. Our first and greatest need is to be saved from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. We must have a Saviour to die in our place, paying the penalty for our sins, otherwise, when it is our time to stand before God, we will not hear the beautiful words, "not guilty". Instead we will be found guilty, and sentenced, deservingly, to eternity suffering in the Lake of Fire with the devil and the other fallen angels.

2. God reassures Abram by confirming the promise that he and Sarah would have a child

Genesis 15:1-20 NKJV

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

The word of the Lord

v 4 **And behold, the word of the Lord came to him:** The Word of the Lord came to Abram. Guess what? We also have the word of the Lord—it’s called the Bible. What did Abram need to be reassured? The word of God. What do need to be reassured? The word of God.

Luke 4:4 NKJV

But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every **word of God.**’”

Luke 5:1 NKJV

So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the **word of God**...

Luke 8:11 NKJV

Now the parable is this: The seed is the **word of God**.

Luke 8:21 NKJV

But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the **word of God** and do it.”

Acts 4:31 NKJV

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the **word of God** with boldness.

Acts 13:44 NKJV

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the **word of God**.

1 John 2:14 NKJV

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the **word of God** abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

We all need reminding and encouragement—we are all so prone to doubt and forget

v 4 **This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir:** God reminds Abram of the promise that He had already given twice before, in Genesis 12:2 and 13:15–16. God knows how much we need to be reminded. We can be reminded by meditating on the Scriptures, by reading and thinking about a passage of Scripture over and over again, so it becomes a part of our thinking, and therefore we don’t so easily forget it.

v 4 **One who will come from your own body shall be your heir:** God clearly stated that Abram and Sarah would have a child, yet the fulfilment of this promise was still 15 years away. Abram had waited about 10 years so far. We can understand his impatience and doubt. But God wasn’t through with growing Abram’s faith. Faith takes time to grow. We must learn patience.

Hebrews 6:11–12 CSB

Now we desire each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of your hope until the end, ¹² so that you won't become lazy but will be imitators of **those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance**.

To help grow Abram's faith, God gives a second visual illustration

God often points us to something we can see to understand or remind us of something that we can't see or don't yet have.

v 5 **“Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants [literally, descendant, singular] be”**: To help Abram's weak faith, God gives a second illustration. The first illustration was given in Genesis 13:16: *“And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.”* Now God says for Abram to look up and try to count the stars. First it was “try to count how many grains of sand there are on the sea shore. Now it's “try to count the stars”. Interestingly, Jesus would be called “the Bright and Morning Star” (Revelation 22:16).

Actually, there are about the same number of stars as there are grains of sand—probably quadrillions of them. The point that God was making is that, some time in the future, the number of Israelites would be too many to count, a vast number. The ultimate and complete fulfilment of this prophecy concerning Israel, like many of the other prophecies concerning Israel, will be during the 1,000 year rule and reign of Christ on the earth, when Jesus rules the world from His temple in Jerusalem, and Israel will be the superpower.

Application: How much does God think about me? How much does He love me?

As a side note, the only other reference in the Bible to something being as numerous as the grains of sand, are the thoughts of God towards us. This should help us to realise that God thinks about us all the time, that we are deeply loved by Him. Just like a loving parent is always thinking about their child, so God, our loving Heavenly Father, is always thinking fondly about us individually.

Psalm 139:16-18 NLT

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

¹⁷ How precious [dear, highly esteemed, valuable, prized] are Your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! ¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, You are still with me!

Digging deeper—remember the singular reason for the birth and existence of the nation of Israel

v 5 **“So shall your descendants [literally descendant or seed, singular] be”**: Why does the Bible in the original Hebrew language keep using the singular word for “descendant” or seed, when it the context is obviously plural—speaking of multitudes of people that would make up the nation of Israel? Because this nation (Israel) that was to come from Abram had a singular purpose—the birth of the Messiah or Saviour of the world—Jesus Christ, who would give up His own life as the once and for all sacrifice for sins. So while the translators translate the word as “descendants”, remember that in the original Hebrew text, the emphasis is always on the one very important descendant from among the multitudes, the One who would come at just the right time—Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:16).

1 John 2:1-2 AMP

My little children, I write you these things so that you may not violate God's law and sin. But if anyone should sin, we have an Advocate (One Who will intercede for us) with the Father—[it is] Jesus Christ [the all] righteous [upright, just, Who conforms to the Father's will in every purpose, thought, and action].

² And He [that same Jesus Himself] is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

3. Abram chooses to trust God's promise that he and Sarah would have a son, and one of his descendants would be the promised Messiah

Genesis 15:6 NKJV

And he [Abram] believed in the Lord, and He [God] accounted it to him for righteousness.

v 6 **And he believed in the LORD:** What was Abram believing? The promise regarding the coming Messiah or Saviour.

Galatians 3:16 AMP

Now the promises (covenants, agreements) were decreed and made to Abraham and his **Seed** (his Offspring, his Heir). He [God] does not say, And to seeds (descendants, heirs), as if referring to many persons, but, And to your **Seed** (your Descendant, your Heir), **obviously referring to one individual, Who is [none other than] Christ (the Messiah).** [Genesis 13:15; 17:8.]

Galatians 3:8-9 NLT

What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in His sight [Justified, Just-if-I'd never sinned, forgiven] because of their faith. **God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."** ⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

v 6 **And He [God] accounted it to him [Abram] for righteousness:** This is the gospel in a nutshell. We believe in God's promise to send the Saviour to save us from our sins, and then God accounts us as being perfect or righteous just like Jesus is perfect or righteous.

We will dig deeply into the glorious truth of the gospel of grace next week. This is the first time the words "believe" and "righteous" are used in the bible. This verse is quoted four times in the New Testament, and we will see how the Holy Spirit further explains this in the rest of the Scriptures next week.

4. Abram needs more reassurance, so God makes a covenant with Abram

God again reminds Abram of the promise that he (and his descendants) would inherit the land

Genesis 15:7 NKJV

Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

We can see just how difficult it would have been for Abram. After ten or so years living in the promised land, the land of Canaan, Abram still didn't own one square inch of the land, not one grain of sand. He was a sojourner, a pilgrim, someone who was just passing through. He never built a house, never had a permanent residence, but always lived in a tent, moving throughout the land as God led him. Thus God has to remind him that yes, one day, his descendants would actually own the land—it would be theirs, and not belong to other nations.

Application: The promised land as a type of walking by faith in this world

However, the promised land, the land of Canaan, is, like just about everything in the Old Testament, a physical picture of a spiritual reality. We to, as believers in this world, have the opportunity to sojourn in the promised land of God's rest; where we, like Abram, learn to live by faith while we pass through this evil world, and seek our heavenly homeland that God has prepared for us.

Hebrews 11:8-16 NLT

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ⁹ And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

¹¹ It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep His promise. ¹² And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

¹³ All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised [in this life], but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶ But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

1 Peter 2:11 AMP

Beloved, I implore you as aliens and strangers and exiles [in this world] to abstain from the sensual urges (the evil desires, the passions of the flesh, your lower nature) that wage war against the soul.

Colossians 3:1-2 AMP

If then you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead], aim at and seek the [rich, eternal treasures] that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [Psalm 110:1.]

² And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth.

Abram again seeks reassurance, this time regarding the promise that he would inherit the land

Genesis 15:8 NKJV

And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

God is so patient. God has just repeated His promise that Abram or his descendants would inherit the land (that it would belong to them). But Abram immediately asks, "**Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?**" God could have gotten mad, impatient, and told Abram to grow up, telling him off for having such little faith—"Can't you just take My word for it Abram!". But no. God instead meets Abram where he is at, giving Abram another physical sign that Abram could understand, that would help Abram believe what God had promised.

Genesis 15:9-20 NKJV

So He [God] said to him [Abram], “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ¹¹ And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

¹⁸ On the same day the Lord made [literally, cut] a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

This is called, “cutting a covenant”. Verse 18 in the original Hebrew language reads literally, “**On the same day the Lord cut a covenant with Abram.**” According to the custom of Abram’s day, the most binding and unbreakable contract that could be made between two people was made by this sacrificial cutting of animals. Once again, God is meeting Abram where he is at, using language and symbols that Abram would appreciate and understand, so that Abram’s faith would grow.

“In answer to Abram’s request for proof that God would give him an inheritance, God instructs Abram to draw up the equivalent of a modern-day contract. You see, in Abram’s day, when two people entered in to a legal agreement, they did so by splitting an animal in two, standing in the midst of the carcass, and clasping each other’s wrist to show that they were deadly serious about keeping up their end of the bargain.” (Jon Courson)

David Guzik further explains how this “cutting a covenant” procedure worked:

“v 10 **Cut them in two ... and placed each piece opposite the other:** Abram knew exactly what to do with these animals; he understood that according to the custom of his day, God told him to get a contract ready for signing.

In those days, contracts were made by the sacrificial cutting of animals, with the split carcasses of the animals lying on the ground. Then both parties to the covenant walked through the animal parts together, repeating the terms of the covenant. The LORD made a covenant in Genesis 15:18 is literally, “the LORD cut a covenant.”

Jeremiah 34:18–20 makes reference to this same practice of a covenant made by cutting animals and repeating the oath of the covenant as one walks through the animal parts.

The symbolism was plain. First, this is a covenant so serious it is sealed with blood. Second, if I break this covenant, let this same bloodshed be poured out on my animals and me.

When Abram had his doubts and wanted assurance from the LORD, God said to him plainly, “Let’s sign a contract and settle this once for all.””

God delays in coming, and Abram keeps the birds from eating the meat off the animal carcasses

v 11 **And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away:** As Abram waited for the LORD to appear and walk through the carcasses with him (to sign the covenant/contract), God didn't come right away. Abram had to wait and fight off the vultures until God turned up. What is the significance of these vultures? Throughout Scripture, most birds symbolise evil, especially vultures. "The picture here is that while Abram waited for God to meet him, he did his best to keep evil at bay, shooing away the birds of doubt and unbelief" (Jon Courson).

Abram didn't doubt that God would keep His word and physically turn up and walk through the animals together with him. Abram's faith was demonstrated by his patience, his willingness to wait on God, and to wait for God.

God gives Abram more information regarding the timing of when his descendants would inherit the land, and how it would come about (vs 12–16)

Genesis 15:12-16 NKJV

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

We'll explain this next time. God tells Abram exactly what would happen before it happened—before the Israelites would inherit the land, they would first be oppressed and slaves in a foreign land, the land of Egypt.

God signs the covenant all by himself—Abram is asleep

Genesis 15:12, 17-21 NKJV

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram... ¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸ On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying:

"To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

The message here is clear: This is an *unconditional covenant*. The promise of the land to Abram's descendants is something that God will do for Abram and the nation of Israel simply because He said that He would. Since Abram did not participate in the signing of the contract (he didn't walk through the animal pieces with God because he was asleep), he had no responsibility, no requirements or obligations to meet. It's all on God. God has all the responsibility. God is restating Genesis 12:7, "*Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."* Every "I will" promise from God is an unconditional promise or covenant.

Next week we will see that the promise for the forgiveness of sins as stated in Genesis 15:6 is also an unconditional covenant—God will do it all, it is God's responsibility—all we need do is believe and receive God's wonderful gift of salvation.