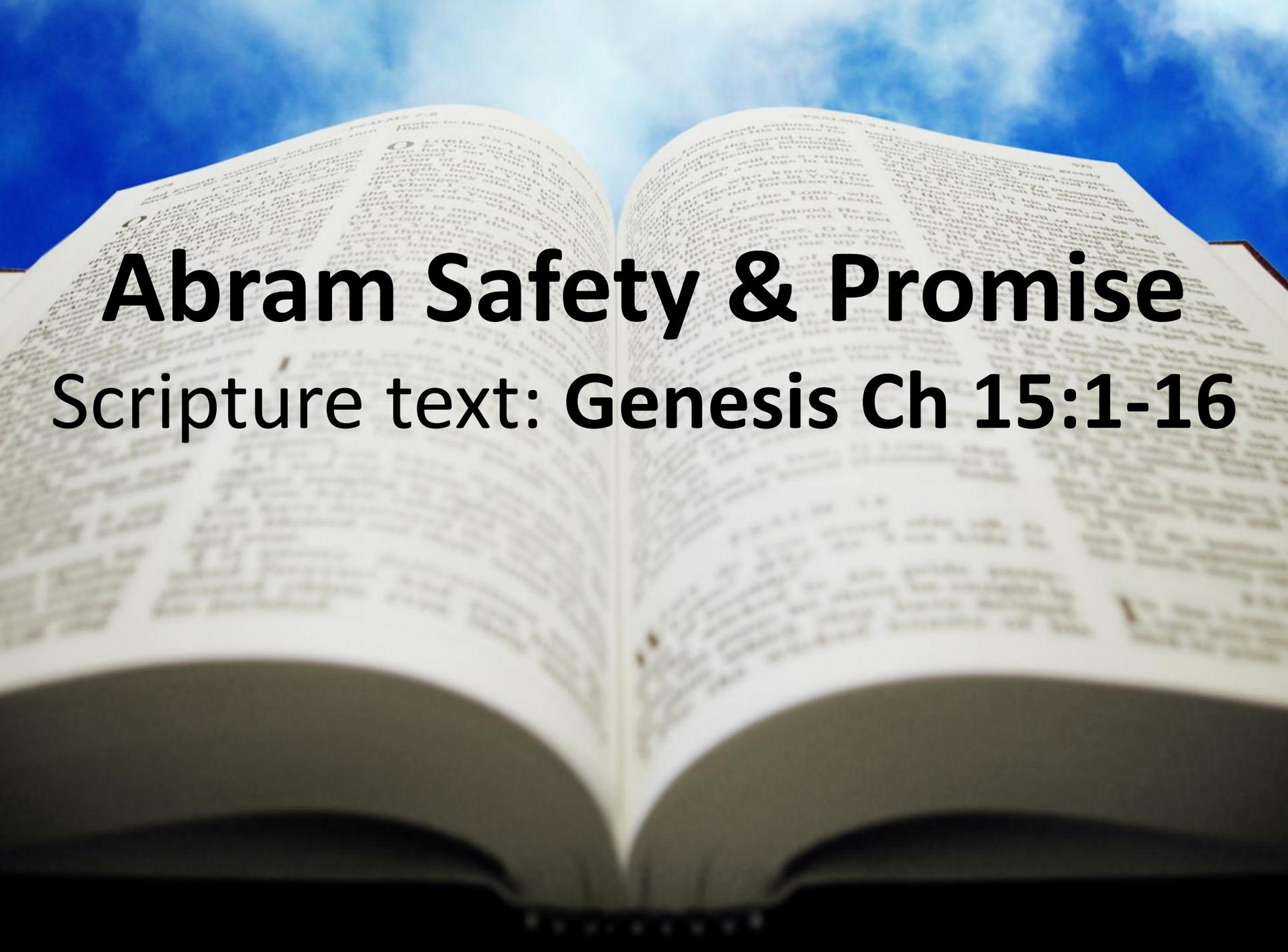


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is out of focus. The background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

Abram Safety & Promise

Scripture text: Genesis Ch 15:1-16

Genesis 15:1-4 After these things **the word of the LORD** came to Abram in a vision: "**Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.**" But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, **the word of the LORD came to him:** "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."

His Safety

Listening to himself. The previous chapter focused on Abraham's actions, but this chapter deals with his emotions, including the "horror of great darkness" (15:12). People with faith are also people with feelings, and feelings must not be discredited or ignored. Many orthodox Christians are prone to emphasize the mind and will and minimize the emotions, but this is a grave error that can lead to an unbalanced life.

We are made in the image of God, and this **includes our emotions**. While it is unwise to trust your emotions and bypass your mind, or let your emotions get out of control, it is also unwise to deny and suppress your emotions and become a religious robot. In the Psalms, David and the other writers told God honestly how they felt about Him, themselves, and their circumstances; and **this is a good example for us to follow**. Jesus was a real man, and He expressed openly His emotions of joy, sorrow, holy anger, and love.

But now that the battle was won, why would Abraham be afraid? For one thing, he was human; and our emotions can “fall apart” after a time of great danger and difficulty.

This helps explain why Elijah was so discouraged after the victory over Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 19).

After the mountaintop comes the valley.

Another factor was the possibility that the four kings might return with reinforcements and attack Abraham's camp. Abraham knew that Eastern kings did not take defeat lightly or let enmity die down quickly.

And suppose Abraham were killed? What would happen to God's covenant and promise?

Have you ever doubted God? Maybe questioned if He would do, what you believed He said He'd do?

Listening to God. You certainly ought to “listen to your feelings” and be honest about them. “When a person assumes responsibility for his feelings,” writes psychiatrist David Viscott, “he assumes responsibility for his world.” But don’t stop there: **Take time to listen to God, and receive His words of encouragement.** This is the first time in the Bible you find the phrase “**the word of the Lord came**”; it is used more than 100 times in the Old Testament. **The faith that conquers fear is faith in the Word, not faith in feelings.**

God spoke to his friend by name (John 10:3).

When I was a lad, I often went shopping for my mother; and the clerks in the stores would call me by name and ask about my family. When my parents went to the bank, the tellers usually knew who they were and greeted them. With very few exceptions, the clerks I meet today see me only as a number in the computer. It seems incredible, but **the God who names and numbers all the stars also knows your name and is concerned about your needs (Ps. 147:3–4).**

John 10:1-5 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. **The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.** When he has brought out all his own, **he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.** A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Psalm 147:3-5 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. **He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.** Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

Psalm 34:17-18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "**Fear not, Abram, I am your shield**; your reward shall be very great."

This is also the first time you find the assuring words "**fear not**" in the Bible. God repeated them to Isaac and Jacob and often to the people of Israel. The "fear not" promises in Isaiah are good to read and ponder when you find yourself dealing with fear.

Genesis 26:24 And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "**I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake.**"

Genesis 46:3 Then he said, "**I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.**

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said to the people, "**Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "**Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.**"

Deuteronomy 1:21 See, the LORD your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has told you. **Do not fear or be dismayed.'**

Isaiah 41:10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:13-14 For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "**Fear not, I am the one who helps you.**" **Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.**

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "**Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.**"

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.

Matthew 6:33 But **seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.

Philippians 4:17-20 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. **I have received full payment, and more.** I am **well supplied**, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. **And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

Protection and provision are blessings that the world is seeking and the politicians are promising whenever they run for office. Candidates offer voters protection from war and danger on the streets as well as provision for jobs, health care, education, and old age. Some of the promises are kept, but many of them are forgotten. **Almighty God is the only One who can offer you protection and provision and keep His promises.** “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. **No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly**” (Ps. 84:11).

His heir

Genesis 15:2-6 But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, **the word of the LORD came to him:** "This man shall not be your heir; **your very own son shall be your heir.**" And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." **And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.**

Asking

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (13:16) and that they would bring blessing to the whole world (12:1–3). But Abraham and Sarah were still childless; and if Abraham died, the only heir he had was his “chief of staff” — Eliezer. (He may be the servant mentioned in 24:2.) Lot was no longer in the picture, and Abraham’s other relatives were 500 miles away in Mesopotamia. What had happened to the promise?

Abraham's concern was not just for himself and his wife, though like all Eastern couples, they wanted children. His concern was for the working out of God's plan of salvation for the whole world. **God had a glorious plan, and God made a gracious promise, but God seemed to be doing nothing!** Abraham and Sarah were getting older, and time was running out.

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.

It is good to share your concerns with the Lord, even if what you say seems to evidence unbelief or impatience in your heart. God is not deaf to your questions or unconcerned about your feelings. He did not rebuke Abraham; instead, He gave him the assurances that he needed.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**

Looking (Gen. 15:4–5). God made it clear that Abraham alone would be the father of the future heir. Heirship depends on sonship. Then God dramatically assured Abraham that this one heir would be the father of so many descendants that nobody would be able to count them. Even when life is dark, you can still see the stars. Someone has well said, “When the outlook is bleak, try the uplook.” Abraham had been looking around, trying to solve his problem; **but the answer lay in looking up.**

Romans 8:14-17 For all who are led by the **Spirit of God are sons of God**. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received **the Spirit of adoption as sons**, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and **if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ**, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

About 30,000 stars are listed in the General Catalog used by astronomers, but it is estimated that there are 100 billion more!

God did not say that Abraham would have that many descendants but that, **like the stars, there would be too many to count.** Whether Abraham looked down at the dust (Gen. 13:14) or up at the stars (15:5), he would recall God's promise and have confidence. This promise was repeated to Abraham (22:17) and reaffirmed to Isaac (26:4).

Believing (Genesis 15:6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.).

Promises do us no good unless we believe them and act on them. Abraham had already trusted God's promise (12:1–3) and proved it by leaving home and going to Canaan (Heb. 11:8). But Genesis 15:6 is the first reference in the Bible to Abraham's faith. It is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament; and for this reason, the New Testament writers use it to illustrate salvation by faith.

Genesis 15:6 And he **believed** the LORD, and he **counted** it to him as **righteousness**.).

There are only five words in the Hebrew original of Genesis 15:6, but what a wealth of meaning they contain. The verse is quoted three times in the New Testament: Galatians 3:6; Romans 4:3; and James 2:23.

The three key words are *believe, counted, and righteousness.*

Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "**believed** God, and it was **counted** to him as **righteousness**"?

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? Abraham **believed** God, and it was **counted** to him as **righteousness**."

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham **believed** God, and it was **counted** to him as **righteousness**"--and **he was called a friend of God**.

Abraham believed God, which is literally, “Abraham said, ‘Amen, God!’ ” The Hebrew word translated “**believed**” means “**to lean your whole weight upon.**” Abraham leaned wholly on the promise of God and the God of the promise. **We are not saved by making promises to God but by believing the promises of God.** In the Gospel of John, which was written to tell people how to be saved (John 20:31), the word “believe” is used nearly 100 times. Salvation is the gracious gift of God, and it is received by faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

3. His land (Gen. 15:7–21)

Affirmation (Gen. 15:7). God had told Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to him and his descendants (12:7; 13:15, 17), and now He reaffirmed that promise. The land is an important part of the covenant for it is in the land of Israel that the divine drama of “salvation history” was enacted. The land of Israel will also be the stage for the final act of that drama when the Messiah returns to reign on earth.

For centuries, Israel was a nation without a land; and it seemed that the covenant promises would not be fulfilled. In 1932, British expositor G. Campbell Morgan wrote, **“I am now quite convinced that the teaching of Scripture as a whole is that there is no future for Israel as an earthly people at all”** (This Was His Faith, p. 290). Then came May 14, 1948, and the rebirth of national Israel! **Just as God kept His promise to Abraham and sent the Messiah, so He will keep His promise and restore the land to His people.**

Assurance (Gen. 15:8–12).

Abraham's question was not a sign of unbelief but a request for a token of assurance. He was confident that God would give him the promised son, but the land was in the hands of ten pagan nations (15:19–21). It was one thing for Abraham to own the land, but how would his descendants possess it so they could enjoy it?

What is described in 15:9–17 was known in that day as “**cutting a covenant.**” This solemn ritual involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The persons making the covenant would sacrifice several animals and divide the bodies, placing the halves opposite each other on the ground. Then the parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrifices in declaration that, **if they failed to keep their word, they deserved the same fate as the animals.**

Jeremiah 34:18-20 And the men who **transgressed my covenant** and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like **the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts--**the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and **all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf.** And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.

But Abraham's experience was different. **He killed the animals, laid them on the ground**, and spent the rest of the day fighting off the birds of prey that were attracted to the flesh and blood. When the sun went down, Abraham fell into a deep sleep; and then God appeared to him and spoke to him. **But God alone passed between the parts of the sacrifices!** (Gen. 15:17) It was God who made promises to Abraham, not Abraham who made promises to God. There were no conditions attached; the covenant of grace came from the generous heart of God.

Anticipation (Gen. 15:13–21). Out of the “horror of great darkness,” Abraham heard the terms of God’s covenant and discovered God’s plan for the nation (15:13–14, 16–17), himself (15:15), and the land (15:18–21).

Genesis 15:13-14 Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that **your offspring** will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But **I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.**

Genesis 15:15-17 As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; **you shall be buried in a good old age.** And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

Genesis 15:18-21 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "**To your offspring I give this land**, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

The nation. Jacob and his family went to Egypt to be protected by Joseph, and there they grew into a mighty people. Arriving in Egypt as honored guests, the Jews eventually became a threat; so Pharaoh made them slaves and afflicted them greatly. Perhaps the smoking furnace was a symbol of the nation's suffering in Egypt. Pharaoh's cruelty could not exterminate the nation because God had plans for His chosen people. God judged Egypt with ten plagues and then enabled Moses to lead the people out triumphantly (Ex. 5–15).

Exodus 1:11-12 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But **the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad.** And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

The events and their timing were in the hands of God. The 400 years of Genesis 15:13 refers to Israel's entire stay in Egypt, from Jacob's arrival to the Exodus. It is a round figure, because Exodus 12:40 puts it at 430 years. Why did God wait so long to deliver His people? Because God was long-suffering with the nations in Canaan and delayed their judgment so they might have more time to repent. Those who condemn Israel (and God) for the way the Canaanites were treated seem to forget that God gave them centuries to repent of their wickedness.

Genesis 15:13 Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.

Exodus 12:40 The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.

Act 7:6 And God spoke to this effect--that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would **enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.**

2 Peter 3:8–9 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but **is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**

Matthew 23:32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.

Abraham (Gen. 15:15). Abraham's "good old age" was **175 years** (Gen. 25:7), which means he walked with God for a century (12:4). In spite of Abraham's occasional failures, **he accomplished the will of God and brought blessing to the whole world.** This promise from God must have given Abraham and Sarah **great encouragement during times of difficulty**, just as promises like Philippians 1:6 and Ephesians 2:10 encourage God's people today.