

Eternal Vision

[God] took [Abram] outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be” (Genesis 15:5).

Scripture: Genesis 15:1-8

Song: “Sovereign”

Dr. William Leslie, a pharmacist from Canada, followed God’s call to serve as a medical missionary in the Congo for 17 years. Reportedly, following a disagreement with a tribal leader, he was asked to leave. Dr. Leslie returned home a disheartened man, believing he had failed to make an impact for God. But decades after his death, others discovered a number of flourishing churches where he had labored—the legacy of Leslie’s faithful work.

Abraham followed God’s call to a foreign land with the promise of God’s blessings. Yet after reaching his new destination, Abraham faced famine (Genesis 12:10), war (14:13-16), and the unfulfilled promise of an heir. When he questioned God (15:2-3), God pointed Abraham to the stars—a visible affirmation of an abundant future yet to unfold.

Sometimes when we obey God, we encounter what we perceive as obstacles and setbacks. If we focus on these, we might be tempted to question His leading. In such times, we do well to ask for help to see God’s blessings and rewards, and for faith to trust God for His promised increase.

Father, grant us vision and patience to trust in Your sovereign power and faithfulness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

July 12–18. **Eileen M. Gregory** has been a freelance author for over 20 years. Currently she lives on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and enjoys shooting nature photography and charity knitting.

Far from Home

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9

Song: “I Need Thee Every Hour”

One of the lowest points of my life was leaving my beloved small community in Massachusetts to live in Orlando, Florida. Big city life—with crowds, concrete, and noise—was the last place that I wanted to build a future, but circumstances were beyond my control. I knew that God had ordained my steps. However, 20 years later, I was able to look back in awe at God’s wisdom, for in the land of my affliction God showered me with opportunities and spiritual riches that might not have been possible had I balked at the move.

Abraham was transplanted by the Lord, called to relinquish the familiar for the unfamiliar and begin again in a foreign land. In ancient times, with no government assistance programs, one’s security and provision—even survival—were typically anchored in the community. But in separating Abraham from his home, God would teach him to live in utter dependence on God.

When we feel alone, whether distanced from loved ones, working in hostile surroundings, or lacking emotional support, these circumstances become opportunities for God to reveal His faithful provision . . . if we will continue to lay every concern at His feet and wait for His plans to unfold.

Father, You are my rock and my fortress, my provider and sustainer. Thank You that my every need is accounted for in Your love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Place of Faith

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith (Romans 4:13).

Scripture: Romans 4:13-15

Song: “Jesus Messiah”

The small-business owner was a temperamental boss who ran his company with an iron fist. Everything was done by the book, right down to monitoring what time workers returned from lunch. A two-minute violation was cause for termination. Socializing during business hours was forbidden. Consequently, the workplace was solemn and oppressive, and eventually constant employee turnover undermined its success.

The law has its place in helping us to maintain order and justice and to protect our lives. But law without love leads to misery—a legalistic relationship void of warmth or truth. God gave Moses the law, not by which to save the people from their sins but to reveal the essence of godly living. Yet long before God revealed that law, He demonstrated through Abraham that salvation would come by faith.

Although we live our lives in accordance with many laws, God knows that our fallen natures preclude us from living obediently 100 percent of the time. Thankfully, He created a means of salvation aside from the bondage of performance. Therefore, it is imperative to continually remind ourselves that Christ has successfully “performed” for us on the cross so that we may rejoice with confidence in our hope of glory.

Father, thank You that we do not have to earn Your forgiveness by keeping the law. Rather, through Christ’s perfection we have obtained His righteous standing before You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

From Death to Life

[Abraham believed] the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not (Romans 4:17).

Scripture: Romans 4:16-18

Song: “Come Alive”

When my employer relocated, I was dismayed over the extra distance I would have to drive to work; however, the change in route yielded a delightful surprise. On the corner of a busy intersection was a small house situated next to a large, vacant lot. I often wondered why the owners left their yard so barren, but when summer arrived the answer became clear. Suddenly, hundreds of gold, blue, and orange wildflowers burst to life, blanketing the property in a display so breathtaking that bypassers would pull over to shoot photographs or to simply enjoy the sight.

Abraham experienced a vacancy in his heart. For years he had pined for a son, and at the age of 100, with a barren wife past the time for bearing children, his dream must have seemed dead. Yet Abraham continued to believe in God’s promise of an heir. Eventually, God enabled Sarah to conceive and she gave birth to the long-awaited son—Isaac.

Our lives, too, may have barren places: the death of a dream, a crippling disability, the loss of a loved one, the ravages of aging . . . But the God who spoke creation into existence and who breathed life into a woman’s dead womb can do amazing things for us too.

Father, nothing is too difficult for You. I pray for new life to spring up in the dead places of my life and for the patience to wait for Your timing. In Jesus’ name, amen.

All-Powerful God

[Abraham] was strengthened in his faith . . . being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised (Romans 4:20-21).

Scripture: Romans 4:19-21

Song: “God Will Make a Way”

A young man became addicted to drugs and alcohol. Unable to gain control over his habits, he eventually fell into a life of crime. Following an event that almost cost him his life, he tried to give up his addictions, but to no avail. Just when all seemed hopeless, he entered a Christian rehab center, where he came to know God’s love and power. At last, the man found his freedom. He gave credit to God for the change in his life. Not only did he become a Christian, but eventually he became a youth minister to help young people seek God’s work in their lives.

Abraham faced a different, but also seemingly impossible, situation. He longed for a son, the heir that God had promised him almost a quarter of a century before. The wait had been long and perhaps frustrating at times; however, Abraham never wavered in his faith. He had walked with God in faith and remained fully certain that there are no limits to what God can do. God never fails.

Abraham is a reminder that we are powerless, but God is able. Take heart—He can make a way and do more than we can think or imagine.

Father, we are comforted to know that all power rests in Your hands and that You are faithful to fulfill Your Word. Strengthen our faith that we may not waver in our belief. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Great Exchange

[Jesus our Lord] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:25).

Scripture: Romans 4:22-25

Song: “In Christ Alone”

American author Sid Fleischman won the Newbery Medal in 1987 for his popular children’s book entitled *The Whipping Boy*. Although a work of fiction, the plot was based on an old European practice that prohibited punishing young princes for their misdeeds. Instead, a common boy was raised alongside the prince for the purpose of taking the whippings on the prince’s behalf. The hope was that in witnessing the pain of the innocent, the prince would repent from his misbehavior.

After living a sinless life, obeying the Father at every turn, Jesus became the whipping boy for all humanity. Mocked, beaten, and humiliated, He took the punishment one step further by giving up His very life on the cross on our behalf. Most astounding was that He did so willingly: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). And the Father showed His acceptance of this offering by raising Jesus from the dead, giving us assurance of our resurrection as well.

The innocent paying for the guilty is a difficult concept to swallow. We recoil at the injustice, yet we rejoice in its truth. For apart from this great exchange—Christ’s righteousness for our transgressions—there would be no hope beyond the grave.

Father, thank You for pardoning our sins through Christ. Help us to be mindful of our right standing before You and to rejoice in the hope of our future resurrection. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Eternally Retired

To the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:4-5).

Scripture: Romans 4:1-12

Song: “Jesus Paid It All”

When Grandpa Joe lost his store in the Great Depression, he went to work delivering furniture. With five mouths to feed at home, and despite his advanced age, Joe toiled for years, hauling dozens of heavy items up two and three flights of stairs, five to six days a week. The work was backbreaking, and eventually his body gave way.

In the Garden of Eden, when God confronted Adam for his disobedience, God proclaimed, “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life” (Genesis 3:17). Even today, many of us can testify to the drain of our labor. Whether we like or dislike our work, we understand the weight of toiling for our wages.

Although our work obligates our employers to pay us, we cannot obligate God. The wages of eternal life have already been earned through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus toiled in order to give us His righteous standing before God, and when we trust in Him we can anticipate entering into His eternal rest.

Father, thank You for delivering us from the burden of working for our salvation. Help us to continually rejoice in the knowledge that You have provided for us an eternity of rest. In Jesus' name, amen.