

Abraham - Part Seven

by Charles E. Wigg

The aftermath for Abraham:

Gen. 15; 1, tells us that it was "After these things", that the word of the Lord came to Abraham; exhorting him not to fear, telling him that God Himself was his shield and protector, God Himself was his exceeding great reward. This is perhaps the greatest personal promise made to Abraham, thus far. Here God is telling him, that all that he needed was to be found in God: God is greater than all his blessings, more wonderful than all His gifts, and His works. Yet Abraham was not content with this, he wanted something that he could see, and feel, something that he could clutch to his bosom; something that he could call his own, he wanted a son and heir. It seems that he grew weary of waiting for the fulfillment of the divine promise. Thus it was that he, who is the outstanding example of faith in the scriptures, gave way to doubt. In this chapter he vacillates between doubt and faith.

Thinking back:

God takes him outside his tent, and bids him look towards heaven; what an act of great kindness this was. God takes Abraham's eyes off his immediate circumstances; makes him to realize that heaven had intervened in his circumstances. He then revealed to Abraham, that behind all of his movements in obedience to the will of God; was God Himself. "I am the Lord,(Jehovah), that **brought** thee out of Ur of the Chaldees". Abraham might have responded by saying, "But I **came** out". Both were true, but the final glory belonged to God. Abraham obeyed, because of the sovereign majesty of God.

It does us good also sometimes, to look back over our lives, and though we will be surely humbled by the realization of our failures, yet our hearts will ever be moved by the unfailing faithfulness of God. We owe everything to Him! The hymn writer says, "With mercy and with judgment, my web of time He wove, and aye the dews of sorrow, were lustered with His love; I'll bless the Hand that guided, I'll bless the heart that planned, when crowned where glory dwelleth, in Emmanuel's land!

Abraham is challenged to number the stars, (a task that no mind of man is able to accomplish), then God says "so shall thy seed be: Here God is revealing to His servant that he is to have a heavenly family; (the Church). Earlier God had said that he would have an earthly family; that his seed would be as the dust of the earth; that is he was to have an earthly family, (Israel). Later God told him that his family would be as the sand on the seashore; (the families taken from the nations, the gentiles).

Momentary faith:

Here it is said "Abraham believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness". This verse is repeated several times in the New Testament, and is used to demonstrate the principle of **justification by faith**. Thank God for these lovely words, they have given hope to lost humanity. "For by **grace** are ye saved, through **faith**". Oh let us rejoice in the glorious truth! However this faith was quickly followed by unbelief, by doubt; but it was not cancelled by Abraham's doubt.

How shall I know?

These are words of doubt, and are written for our encouragement. None of us can boast in the strength of our faith; at best it is very weak. But let us thank God that He is not restricted by the weakness of our faith. It is not the strength of our faith that matters, but the **object of that faith**. But God had a lesson to teach Abraham, a lesson from which we must learn.

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Dealing with doubt:

In what follows from verse 9; God teaches Abraham the destructive nature of doubt; also how to deal with it. He was told to take two female animals, (speaking of meekness and submission), and a ram, (speaking of strength), and two birds, (speaking of meekness, blamelessness). Abraham did this; he then divided the carcasses, and laid each half opposite to the other, leaving a pathway in between. The purpose of this was to enable God to make the strongest affirmation of His covenant, the strongest known to man. This offering was for God; however the fowls came down upon the carcasses to consume them, but Abraham did not allow this to happen, he drove them away.

A picture of what doubt will do:

When we allow doubts to enter our minds, they will quickly tear our faith to shreds. They will quickly devour what was meant to be for the pleasure of God. Like Abraham, we must scare them away; we do this by believing, and by quoting to ourselves the precious promises of God. This is what our Lord Jesus did when Satan came with his doubts in the temptations in Luke chapter four. But Jesus replied to each temptation with the words, "**It is written**". This is like throwing a stone at a vulture; they take fright, and go away. Here is the example for us to follow when doubts come. Let us reassure our souls, by repeating to ourselves; and to the tempter, the precious promises of God. It is impossible that God should lie. Even the false prophet was compelled to exclaim, God is not a man that He should lie!....."Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He spoken and it not come to pass? Nothing can alter His promises; His word is more reliable than either heaven or earth! When we affirm our faith in what God says, the doubts do not linger.

Doubt brings darkness:

When the sun was going down, and all was becoming dark, a deep sleep, and a horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham: When we entertain doubt, it will always bring darkness into our souls. If we allow the darkness to remain, it will lead to despair, and if we are swallowed up by despair, it may lead to destruction. First the destruction of our joy, then our hope, and finally our reason for living.

However it was at that time that God drew near; He revealed to Abraham, His greatness, His foreknowledge, and the fact that He had all in His hands, that He knows the end from the beginning. God drew aside the veil of time; He revealed the events of the next 500 years, as they effected Abraham's descendants. He reassured Abraham, that whatever his weaknesses, or failures might be, he would live out his long life in the experience of God's blessing, and that he would die in peace. Abraham had never witnessed such a death. God then did, (for Abraham's sake), what He had never done before, He caused a burning furnace, and a smoking lamp, to pass between the pieces of the offerings that Abraham had laid out.

The burning furnace represented the fierceness of God's wrath and judgment that was seen finally at Calvary. There the wrath of God was poured upon the sinless substitute. The Covenant of God was not based on compromise, but upon perfect justice. The smoking lamp; represents the light of God that shines from His word. The covenant of God, is the fulfillment of the promises that He has made in His Book.

We learn the significance of the details of this event from a passage in Jeremiah, chapter 34; 18, where it is shown to be the accepted way of making a most solemn covenant.