

## Our Covenant God – Part Fourteen

### Abraham's eighth encounter with God

The last two lessons dealt with Abraham offering Isaac up as a sacrifice to God on a mountain in the land called Moriah. This lesson completes our examination of this incident in Genesis 22.

### Faith without works is dead

One lesson that we learn from Abraham in Genesis 22 is that faith without works is dead. James addressed this in his letter:

**James 2:14-26** (NKJV) What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*" And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

The truth is that although God did not order Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to Him, Abraham could not really have chosen to not do so. Why? Because if you really believe that God is a good God and that He has your best interests at heart your actions have to be a reflection of the belief that you have inside of you. If Abraham had refused to sacrifice Isaac that would have been the same as saying "God, I don't believe that Your promises are true. I don't believe that You really are my covenant friend." But Abraham did believe God and that is proven by his obedience to God.

**Homework Question #1:** (This is not a question for the public forum. This is for an intimate time of fellowship between you and God.) Our actions are a reflection of what we really think. To repent means to change your thinking. Ask yourself: What are the things that I do (or don't do) that reveal unbelief hidden inside my own heart? Ask God to search your heart and to show you what needs to be uprooted. Find out what God's Word says about that specific matter/s and saturate yourself in those Scriptures. As your thinking changes, your actions will follow. Step out and do what you have been too scared to do before. Take a chance on God and trust Him to confirm His Word.

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**Mark 16:20** (NKJV) And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen

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### “By Myself I have sworn,” says the LORD

**Genesis 22:15-18** (NKJV) Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

The dramatic finale is this statement by God as He swore an oath to be faithful as a friend to Abraham, just as Abraham had proven himself a faithful friend of God. Just as Abraham had offered up his son, Isaac, God was promising that He would save Abraham’s descendants even if they were unfaithful to Him. No matter what, God would be faithful – because of His friendship to Abraham. Time would prove that God was indeed faithful to His promises to Abraham even when Abraham’s descendants rejected Him as their King and served other Gods. Ultimately, God would send His own Son to die in their place – and it would be descendants of Abraham who would demand that He die. To this day, God is still faithful to His friend, Abraham, and He loves the Jewish people so very much!

**Hebrews 6:13-19a** (NKJV) For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “*Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.*” And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...

The writer of Hebrews tells us that God made this oath to Abraham for our benefit. You and I would never experience what Abraham experienced. God never told us to slaughter animals and cut them in half as their blood poured out on the ground. We never saw what appeared to be a flaming torch and a smoking oven passing between those pieces. But one thing that we can hold onto is God’s oath – His Word. There can be no argument or dispute about this matter. It was final. God swore an oath. There is no more to be said because God cannot lie. The matter was settled forever by God’s oath.

### Your descendants shall possess the gates of their enemies

**Genesis 22:17** (NKJV) blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; **and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.**

Everything that God swore to Abraham was a repeat of what He had promised before... except for one addition: God promised that Abraham’s descendants would possess the gates of their enemies.

The gates of a city are the primary area of the city that needs defense. The rest of the city is protected by walls. The gates are vulnerable because they are openings in the wall. Whoever controls the gates, controls the city. God was promising that Abraham’s descendants would have military conquests. That would be essential in order for them to possess the Promised Land.

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Another aspect to consider about the gate is that “to sit in the gate” is a synonym for “to be a judge”. One of the many places where we see this is in the account of Lot. He sat in the gates of the city and judged the people of Sodom.

Paul addressed this in his letter to the Corinthians. He was shocked that some were suing their fellow-believers in secular courts. He explained:

**1 Corinthians 6:1-3 (NKJV)** Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

### You were given specific dominion by God

**Psalms 115:16** The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's; But the earth He has given to the children of men.

In Genesis God gave Adam dominion / rulership over this earth:

**Genesis 1:26-28** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

**Homework Question #2:** Who and what did God NOT give Mankind dominion / rulership over?

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Mankind messed up. Adam and Eve did not exercise that dominion. But God's plan never changed. God created Man to rule and reign in life. We are to have dominion over all of Creation – except for the heavenly realms and other people. We are to judge matters but we are not to dominate or control other people. God gave Mankind free will and we are to use that free will to rule and reign in life.

A person who is ruled by a cruel master is oppressed and enslaved. Here are some examples of cruel masters:

1. Death (Romans 6:9)
2. Sin (Romans 6:14)
3. Debt (Matthew 18:27)
4. Money (Luke 16:13)
5. Fear (Romans 8:15)
6. The Law of Moses (Galatians 2:3-5, 18-21)

You and I have to be master over each of these cruel masters. If we fail to master them then they will master and enslave us. They are not necessarily bad things. For example: money. Money is certainly not bad – unless it rules over us. It can be a useful tool and a good servant.

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Life can be complicated but if we allow God’s Word to shape our thinking we can most certainly rule and reign in life, no matter what giant we face. Some giants must die, while others must be turned into servants that we master. For example: death. Death becomes your servant as you recognize that it was defeated by Christ’s death and resurrection and you realize that because Jesus rose from the dead and because you are “in Christ” then you will also be resurrected and be with God forever. Therefore, death is no longer a master over you but a servant that will transport you from this corruptible world into the glorious Kingdom of God.

Sin cannot ever be your servant. Rather, it is an enemy that must die. Once again, the death and resurrection of Christ is pivotal to conquering this foe because as I reckon the old man to be dead and myself to be a New Creation, alive in Christ, then sin can no longer be part of my life because a dead man cannot sin.

**Homework Question #3:** As you consider each of the other four cruel masters, being debt, money, fear, and the Law of Moses, how can each of those be turned from a master into a servant?

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