

March 14, 2021

God and Man

"The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

*"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you:
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
"To your offspring I will give this land..."*

Genesis 12:1-7

The account of the life and times of Abraham in Genesis shows us a great deal about our God and also, I think, shows us a great deal about ourselves. Perhaps the greatest lesson we learn about the God of heaven from Abraham's life is that God is always and absolutely a promise keeper. When our God makes a promise he keeps that promise even if we do not always believe that.

Abraham's life is fundamentally the story of a believer who has some faith, but whose faith really grows and develops over time until finally it is perfected. Abraham is prepared from the very beginning of his story to follow God's direction and call, but his obedient surrender is not really complete until the end of his life.

So, when God calls Abraham and commands him to *"...leave his country and his people and his father's household..."* the Patriarch obeys, but he also takes his nephew Lot, who is a member of his father's household, along. Abraham is prepared to obey God and to follow God, but...

God promises to shield Abraham from threat and yet twice Abraham gets his wife Sarah to lie about their relationship because he is afraid of the threat posed by others because of her. So, Abraham's life is really the story of a believer whose faith is growing and being perfected over time. Abraham is prepared to surrender to God, but he is still, as many of us are, tempted to hedge his 'bets' with God.

Another human characteristic we see in Abraham is his tendency to try to 'help' God keep his promises. God promises Abraham a son with Sarah, but as the Patriarch ages he tries to help God keep that promise by fathering a son with Hagar, his wife's servant. The birth of Ishmael becomes a serious problem for Abraham throughout the rest of his life and continues to be the source of problems even in our world.

It is not really until near the end of Abraham's life that he emerges as a great example of a completely surrendered faith. In Genesis 22:2 God calls on Abraham to *"Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."*

At this point in his life Abraham has arrived at that place all of us should seek; he has completely surrendered his life to God. So, having been commanded to take his son to the area which will one day be Jerusalem and offer him there as a burnt offering, Abraham goes. Abraham follows God's command despite the overwhelming grief and heartache he must have felt.

It is in his answer to Isaac's question about their sacrifice that we finally hear the absolutely surrendered heart of the Patriarch. When Isaac questions his father about their sacrifice Abraham says, *"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering..."* (Genesis 22:8)

Our walk of faith should, I think, reflect the life of the Abraham in that we, like him, should always be growing towards that time when we can absolutely believe that God always and absolutely provides; that he always keeps his promises. That kind of surrendered existence is not the level of faith that most of us have right now, but it should be the level of faith that we constantly aspire to have. God is a promise keeper. God will provide. Do we completely accept that?

