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LET US GO ON - 8

(Hebrews Chapter Seven)

CHRIST - OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Christ is greater than Aaron, and Aaron's successors, because of:

I. THE GREATER "ORDER" TO WHICH HE BELONGS (vs.1-11)

i.e. The order of Melchisedec. The superiority of the "order" is seen in the evident superiority and eminence of Melchisedec himself. Melchisedec is the Priest who:

- 1) Bears a Royal Name; King "of Righteousness, King of Peace (v.2b).
- 2) Has an untraceable lineage and destiny (v.3) ("not of this world").
- 3) Received tithes from the great Abraham (and all who were in Abraham including Levi and Aaron) (vs. 4,6,9,10).
- 4) Bestowed blessing on the great Abraham (so was obviously his superior) (vs. 6b,7).

The very institution of this new "order", following Christ's glorification, itself implied that the earlier "order" was something imperfect and needed replacement (v.11).

II. THE GREATER "LAW" BY WHICH HE OPERATES (v3. 12-19).

There is a far greater reason or qualification for His functioning as Priest. It was not a mere matter of "tribal connection" or "family succession". (Christ was connected with Judah, not Levi). It was in virtue of the "power of His endless life". (The very duality of His being, initiated Him into this superior ministry).

III. HIS SUPERIOR FEATURES OF HIS PRIESTHOOD (VS. 20-28).

- 1) A superior ordination (by Divine oath) (vs.20-22).
- 1) A superior duration (Priest for ever) (vs. 23 - 25). He needs no successors or replacements, so can personally complete His own saving work in each of us.
- 2) A superior character (separate from sinners) (v. 26a).
- 3) A superior location (higher than the heavens) (v. 26b).
- 4) A superior offering, - Himself (v.27). He presents one all-sufficient sacrifice, not a multitude of unavailing shadow-sacrifices.
- 5) A superior Name ("The SON, consecrated forevermore") (v. 28).

This is the central chapter of Hebrews, and certainly its message is central. While the epistle as a whole tells us we MUST "go on", chapter seven tells us that we MAY "go on", - and why. The glorious fact is that we now have this Great High Priest established for us in the heavens, and ministering for us, and to us, continually. On this ground we may certainly know "salvation to the uttermost", i.e. salvation to the full extent of the divine intention, - as outlined in this epistle!

What a boon it is to have such an understanding and exalted Priest! There is great need for the Church as a whole to realize and appreciate and appropriate the infinite

values of Christ's present ministry for us "within the veil". We are told that Christ saves us by His LIFE, - His Risen LIFE (Rom . 5:10), and while that may mainly refer to His indwelling of our bodies, it certainly includes His intercessions in the Glory for all our needs. While it is blessedly true that we have an Advocate within, it is equally true that we have an Advocate above , - "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1John 2:1), Who pleads our cause and presents His blood for us in every necessitating situation. And, while He continues faithful there, we may continue victorious here! All this clearly reminds us of the simple history in Exodus 17 : 8 - 11 . Israel was able to triumph over the crafty Amalekites in the valley, so long as Moses held up his hands for them on the mountain top. We notice, incidentally, that it was this same Aaron (the lesser priest) who stayed up the weary hands of Moses on that mountain, so that Israel might know victory. Now, thank God , we have this Greater than Aaron to hold up holier hands on our behalf, and in the unwearied power of His resurrection and exaltation, - a Priest FOR EVER! If we can but see this fact, by divine revelation, there will certainly be no back - drift to a superceded "order of priesthood", or to any religious externalism or ritual for that matter, but a confident "going on" to God's intended fullness.

(To be contd.)

C.R.G.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

as from HEBRON, Golconda Crossroads, Hyderabad – 500020, AP, INDIA,
Telephone No. 27613066, 2222008 Date : 26-06-2008.

Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father Who in His foreknowledge has elected us in Himself, through sanctification of the Holy Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Blessed be His Name Who hath begotten us to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. May He keep us by the power of God through faith unto salvation to be revealed in the last time, wherein we greatly rejoice (1 Pet. 1:2,3,5,6,13,14; ? Pet. 1:10,11).

It is mentioned in the above text, the term, "through sanctification of the Spirit". It is through the inner working of the Holy Spirit in us that a division is brought about in us between the flesh and the spirit and we learn what it means to walk after the Spirit, mind the tilings of the Spirit, and the quickening of the Spirit in our mortal bodies, as we read in Rom . 8:1,5,11. In Romans 8 the Apostle is seeking to bring before us the clear division between those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells, and those in whom He does not dwell. Of us the Apostle writes, "Ye are not in the flesh", and you do not "walk after the flesh".

Every unbeliever has the mind of the flesh, and although he may sometimes do good and nice things, and may sometimes appear to obey the law of God, he obeys, not because he really wants to, but because in that particular point his mind happens to coincide with the will of God . The whole set of his mind however, and the direction of his life are against God in spite of the good things he sometimes does. Whereas every believer has the mind of the Spirit, in spite of the sins he at times commits. In spite of the fleshly things he sometimes does, he is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

This is a tremendous assurance and a hope. If you know that the Spirit of Christ is in you , do not let what is said here worry you . It is not meant to make you waver, and wonder as to whether sometimes you are on your way to hell, and some times on your way to heaven , but simply asks whether the Spirit is in you . What is the set of your heart and mind? What do you really want? Is the Spirit in you? If so, then you are infallibly on the road to heaven and you always will be.

We are considering distinctiveness here and that is a lesson we must learn. We have to say, "Yes, Lord, I did sin yesterday and today too, and I am not nearly so distinctive as I ought to be. I am not as nearly so different from unbelievers as I should be, and pray for the Spirit's help". That is the aim of distinctiveness, but underneath it Paul urges us not to forget that fact of the matter that we are already distinctive, with the Spirit in our hearts creating a desire to obey the law of God, and leading us on toward heaven. The law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death.

We see delightfully how Paul proceeds with his argument, linking all together in one piece. "And if..." he is saying, "Let us remember the next stage, that the Spirit will also give you life in your mortal body". This new life is the life of eternity. He is not talking about the length of it, that after death it will go on for ever, but affirming the quality of this life — it is the divine life of eternity. There are two 'its' - "If Christ be in you" (v 10) and "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (v.9). We take them in turn.

"If Christ be in you". It is true that the body is dead because of sin, but it is equally true that your spirit is life because of righteousness. If Christ is in you, then the Spirit of God Who is in you gives you life in your spirit. If you ask "Why is that?", the answer comes that it is because of righteousness. Righteousness means the way things ought to be. One of these days God will see to it that everything is in the way it ought to be, but meanwhile that is what we should be working for now. Righteousness is the way everything will be when we get to heaven (2 Pet. 3:13). It is the permanent characteristic of the life in heaven. The Spirit in you is the Spirit of righteousness, and will therefore endure for ever. It is indestructible. By the Spirit within, you have that one cardinal quality, which is essential for heaven - righteousness. In a sense nothing else matters. The life of heaven is righteous, and if we can say, "I am righteous" - then we fit in there. We have the right characteristic. If Christ is in us, the Spirit in us is the Spirit of eternal life, because He is the Spirit of righteousness.

Although it is true that the body we have is a mortal body, affected by man's sin, the Spirit is life because of Christ's salvation. The body is dead. It will continue to be affected by death and God is not going to reverse that process, but rather let the infection run its course. But God is to start anew with a new body. He gives us the Spirit of life which is eternal, but our bodies have too much wrong with them for Him to change them at the moment. The body is dead - it is mortal and it has been going to death ever since it was born, being from that moment, on the way to the grave. If Christ is in us however, death will be overcome by His new life.

"Now therefore, before I close the paragraph" says Paul, "Let me tell you one more thing. I have just said that if Christ is in you, His Spirit is life. But there is one more thing to say, and that is that He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also bring you life for your mortal body". Is not this amazing? We are to know the reality of literal (physical) resurrection. Speaking about the hope of physical resurrection we are reminded about baptism in Romans 6 - baptism by immersion. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Now what happened when Christ was raised from the dead? His body came out of the tomb and ever since He has had a spiritual body, alive in the heavens. If His Spirit is in us, then let us say it again, "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies".

It is not therefore in any kind of despair or misery that we recognize that these physical bodies of ours are mortal because of sins. None of us knows for how many months or years we may be going downhill to the grave. But what we do know is that when our mortal bodies have died, He Who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies. It will be a body without any limitations, which will never grow old - a body which will have all the

faculties which we have. It is life of eternity which the Spirit of life gives to the child of God. The Lord Jesus said in John 5:25,28,29, "...The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" - also "...the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth...". So in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul says about the tent which will be folded up, and the permanent house which will replace it. This body in which we live now will be replaced by another one to house the new creation. All this is done for us by the Spirit, if we belong to Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. All these gifts of the Spirit and operation of the Spirit and promises of the Spirit are truly for us. Praise His Name.

Please pray for full recovery and normal health of Bro .K.M .Samson, God's servant from Beer- Sheba, Kadapa, who had to undergo surgery and hospitalization after injury of his right arm-fracture between shoulder and elbow. He was returning from Srisailem on 18th June after participation in a funeral service.

Praying that the Holy Spirit's work in us through our constant abiding in our Lord Jesus Christ, may be deep and definite, delivering us from all that is of the world and flesh, to serve our Lord Jesus effectively in His foreordained purpose and program in this age, for His Church, Rom. 8:1,2,14 Eph. 2: 21,22 1 Peter 2:1-5
I remain, Yours in His grace, K. PHILLIP

FAITHFUL U N T O D E A T H - 4 **BAKHT SINGH**

In 2 Chronicles 34:1-3 we read of Josiah who began to reign when he was eight years old. At an early age this king began to seek the Lord. As believing parents we must be faithful in coming to God's House. Our children, at a very early age, should be taught to honour the Word of God, to be reverent, and learn how to give God His portion. As a result we can expect our children also to be like the good king Josiah. When Josiah was yet very young, only 16 years old, wherever he found the graven images and the groves of trees which were being worshipped, he broke them. He cleansed the temple. He had a great zeal to bring about true worship. Even today we find many believers who are slaves to Hindu customs, rituals and ceremonies. At times of child birth or marriage, they follow those customs. God wants us to be delivered from these evil customs. Whenever we find believers following heathen customs, we should rebuke them, and also refuse to attend all functions of this kind.

If you read verses 3 and 7 you will see how thoroughly Josiah purged the land and the House of God. Then the people also began to work very faithfully. It is only when we as God's servants have done our duty in purging and cleansing the House of God, can we see faithfulness in the people also. Even God's people constantly sin against Him, and follow things of darkness, like rituals and ceremonies. Wherever we see such weaknesses we have to put our shoulders to the work and repair the breaches.

While they were repairing the House of God, they found the Book of the Law, and that Book was brought to the king. When the king heard what was written in the Book, and understood that neither he or the people had kept the Law of God, immediately he repented and rent his clothes. He readily received God's Word and obeyed it.

King Josiah had done much for the House of God. He had cleansed the whole land of idols and groves. When God's Word was brought to him, he humbled himself and said, "Search my heart and see if I, or my men have failed Thee in any way".

May the Lord grant that we may be found faithful with our time, talents and money. May He make us faithful in service in the House of God. May He keep us faithful in every suffering and in obedience to God's Word. Thus shall we receive the reward of the overcomers.

(Concluded)

JEHOVAH - JIREH BAKHT SINGH

One of the names attributed to God in the Holy Bible is "Jehovah-Jireh", which means, 'The Lord will provide' (Gen . 22:14). This is the name which Abraham in his faith gave to the living and true God.

"Jehovah" means "The One Who reveals Himself", that is, "God, Who can be experienced and known personally". Generally, people think no one can find God . This is a mistake. The great and infinite God can be found by us. We can taste Him and enjoy His mercies. Just as two persons become friends and get to know each other intimately, we can get to know God also in a personal way. Then as we grow in His friendship the Lord will become more and more real and precious to us, and reveal Himself to us increasingly day by day. This is the meaning of the name "Jehovah".

God revealed Himself to Abraham ten times as we read in Genesis 12 and chapters following. Three times in the Bible Abraham is called the friend of God (Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23). God considered Abraham as His friend, so He says in Genesis 18:17, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" God would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah without revealing His intention to Abraham, although no one else was to know of it until it happened.

Those who know God personally will have many heavenly secrets revealed to them . Before God judges the world and pours out His wrath upon them , He reveals His plans to His chosen people. Sometimes, before a catastrophe is about to take place, God's children have a strange feeling in their spirits that something unusual is going to happen. Such inward understanding will become our constant experience when God becomes our friend.

Such an experience of enjoying God's friendship is illustrated in Genesis 22 where we see Abraham saying, "God will provide", even though he could not foresee exactly how it was going to happen. God had asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. As they were going along to Mount Moriah Isaac questioned, "My father: behold the fire and the wood : but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham replied, "My son, God will provide" (Gen. 22:7,8). We should not think that Abraham was telling a lie in order to hide the secret from his son Isaac. The fact is that Abraham knew by revelation that God would provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice. At the same time he was fully prepared to obey God and offer his son on the altar strongly believing that even if his son were killed, God was well able to raise him up even from the dead . By giving such revelations to Abraham God was increasing his faith.

True, we are saved by faith, but we have to be taken through many difficult and trying experiences to have our faith made strong and active. Abraham obeyed God with simple faith and thus he was enabled to understand the greater blessings God was offering to him.

It is interesting to note that the very same site where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac became the site of the temple which was built by Solomon. (To be continued)

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LET US GO ON - 9

(Hebrews Chapter Eight)

THE BETTER COVENANT

- 1) He is sealed in the heavens, - the 'true tabernacle' (vs. 1-2). N.B. There were no "seats" for the priests in the old tabernacle! Everything was "transient"!
- 2) He has His own offerings to offer (vs.3-5). He presents His own efficacious blood, and pleads His own finished sacrifice.
- 3) He has obtained "a more excellent ministry" (vs. 6 - 9) i.e. He mediates or "dispenses" the "better covenant" of which God had earlier spoken (see Jer. 31:31 34), continually bringing us into the good of its promises.

II. THE WONDERFUL TERMS OF THIS COVENANT (VS. 10-12).

It combines four great promises :-

- 1) God's law "written in our hearts" (so that we spontaneously do the things that please Him (Cp. Ezek. 36:26,27) (v. 10)
- 2) A sublime relationship established; "I their God , - they My people" (v. 10).
- 3) An INWARD KNOWING OF THE LORD (v.11) (Through experiencing His salvation).
- 4) A merciful cleansing from sin (v.12). (This is needed for entering into the new relationship and for enjoying the new relationship!) (Cp. 1 John 1:7).

III. THE IMPLIED DISMISSAL OF THE OLD COVENANT (v.13).

The very mention of "New covenant" makes the old covenant obsolete. away the old, which only loaded us with endless duties and deep condemnations).

Covenants, in the Bible, are simply solemn agreements or pledges made between party and party, and sealed, in some cases, by accompanying rituals. Men frequently made such covenants amongst themselves, and from time to time, God also made His covenants with men (See Gen. 6:18; 9 : 8 - 17 ; 15:18, etc.). Of the latter kind, two were clearly outstanding, and determined, in fact, two distinct dispensations. They were called the old covenant and the new. The former covered and characterized the whole solemn "arrangement" which God made with redeemed Israel at Sinai, involving the ten commandments and all the ceremonial feasts and rituals (Exo. 19:3-5). But this was to be only tentative and temporary... "until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10). The new covenant, on the other hand, was the wholly new spiritual "order" to be administered by the Ascended Christ, and it revolved around certain unqualified promises of God ; - His faithful pledge to do for us all we need (Jer. 31:31 -34 ; Heb. 0:10-12, etc.). Because God is a gracious God, His ultimate thought is that of a great impartation rather than a tedious requirement, and this is the covenant which our Ascended Priest now administers in Heaven. Christ is there explicitly to make this covenant an enjoyed reality to us, and, by presenting His blood for us, and supplying His Spirit to us (Phil . 1 : 19), and watching sympathetically over us, He brings us into this glorious sum of all covenant bliss and happiness. Once again we say that, if we really see this by revelation, the old "shadow-rituals" will have no more attraction for us, (or we shall be in the glorious antitype of everything.

The important thing for us, in our day, is to be in the good of Christ's heavenly administrations of this later covenant. That will certainly emancipate us from mere religious externalisms, even in "Christianity", and, on the positive side, it will provide us with the inward essence of all effective testimony. Thank God, then, for the new covenant, and the living Lord Who dispenses it!

(To be contd.) C.R.G.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

Hebron, Golconda Crossroads Hyderabad – 500020, A.P., India
Telephone No: 27613066, Date: 20-05-2008.

Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

May His Name be praised and adored, even the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath shepherded us safely into the latter half of the year, in His goodness and mercy. Praise be unto Him Who is the same, Who changeth not, Whose "years shall not fail". In the words of Apostle Paul, let us continue to affirm from the depth of our hearts, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ", although we may be passing through days of adversity or activity of the adversary, in the family or the fellowship life amongst His people. As the God of Jacob may He hear us and send us help from the sanctuary, strengthening us out of Zion (Psa. 23:1 - 3,6; Heb. 1:12; 13:8; Eph. 1:3; Psa. 20:1-3).

We are endeavoring to consider the first chapter of Ephesians, although we have written and meditated and preached these valuable truths and are in the enjoyment of them in a measure. His first section in Ephesians (1:3-14) in the original is just one sentence. It is really an ecstatic hymn of praise to the Father, for what He has done for us. It also reminds us that this our present chorus of praise in our pilgrimage, is but a prelude to the eternal, future, appreciation of God's great goodness to us undeserving sinners.

Three times over this objective is brought before us in the phrase - 'To the praise of his glory', and in fact we might almost think that the arrangement of the sentence is designed to call us to praise and worship the whole Trinity. 'To the praise of the glory of his grace' (v.6), refers us back to the Father's loving choice of a glorious destiny for us. "To the praise of his glory" (v. 12), closes the paragraph which stresses on the Son's loving sacrifice on Calvary to redeem us to God. The final praise of the passage "unto the praise of his glory" (v.14), is closely connected with the loving activities of the Holy Spirit, ensuring the full assurance and realization in us of the divine purpose. Not that there are three different sections, for as it is impossible to divide up the three Persons of the Trinity, so it would be artificial to divide this sentence into three parts. It is good though to realise that while we open it up with heartfelt tribute to the heavenly Father, our experiences "in the heavenly places" are altogether Trinitarian - Father, Son and Spirit combining in their purpose of love for all of us who are saints and believers (v.2).

1. Available blessings: the opening statement is overwhelmingly wonderful. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. We are told that He has already done this. First of all we note that here all God's activities are spoken of in terms of the past. When we come to the next reference to the heavenlies (vs. 15-23), we will find ourselves praying for a deep understanding of these truths. But here we find stated in (vs. 13 - 14) - stated positively what God has already done. He has blessed us (v.3), because He has chosen us (v.4), predestined us (v.5), redeemed us (v.7), enlightened us (v.9) and sealed us (v. 13).

This last action brings us up to the present, (or it is associated with our first committal of faith, but the chain of events leading up to the present carries us far back into that timeless era, "Before the foundation of the world". From all eternity the Father desired holy sons, determined to have them, chose those in whom He could satisfy His desires and plans and redeemed them for Himself. All this is included in the assertion that He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. There

are no adaptations and modifications and no afterthoughts with our God. He did not need to improvise when Adam failed Him since in any case Adam was only "the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:14). God was not obliged by Israel's rejection of Christ to accept the crisis of the cross, since the whole matter of the slain Lamb had been decided upon before times eternal. We must never think of second causes in our appreciation of God's sovereign grace. The constitution and destiny of the Church was conceived and decided by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from all eternity. Thus it is we find ourselves "in the heavenlies" with every spiritual blessing lavished upon us in Christ. One of the greatest Christian virtues is humility, and to discover rightly the vast heavenly setting into which salvation has brought us, cannot do other than humble us to the dust. In the heavenlies we find that we are dealing with a God, Who is totally committed to give us every blessing and Who will explain to us why this is so. We begin then with the assertion that all God's blessings are freely available to those who are in Christ.

2. Spiritual blessings: Before we go further however, we need to take note of the fact that the blessings being spoken of are spiritual blessings. It is true that in the Old Testament blessings are often described in terms of material prosperity and well being, as may be verified in such passages as Deut. 28 : 1 - 13 . But even in those days people proved that God's essential and lasting blessings are always those which are spiritual. Some of the Lord's honored servants never experienced those outward signs of His favor which men call blessings.

Moses entered the service of God with just a shepherd's rod and forty years later he had seemingly accumulated nothing more in terms of earthly possessions. He had no cattle of his own and never accepted any as gifts (Num. 16:15). His brother Aaron was clothed with beautiful garments, but Moses went through to the end with the clothes he stood up in. He had no special supplies of food, but presumably had to collect his supplies of daily manna just like others. In a striking scene of retirement, Aaron passed on his priestly office to his son Eleazar (Num. 20 : 25 - 29), whereas Moses died in solitude, and had no family connections with his successor Joshua. So Moses had no earthly prosperity, yet who will doubt that he was one of the most blessed of all God's servants!

Elijah was certainly an outstanding representative of all the prophets, but clearly all his blessings must have been spiritual, for he had no assets here on earth and neither did he desire any. Even in those Old Testament days the greatest blessings were spiritual. And how much more so in the New Testament! Spiritual blessings are what matters. They are lasting and have always eternity in view. These are what the Lord Jesus was talking about in the beatitudes of the Sermon on the mount. The term "spiritual blessings" - the description as such appears to limit the extent of God's blessings. This is not all the case. On the contrary it enlarges the sphere of blessedness for those in the heavenlies, for in their case everything can truly be called a divine blessing and can become spiritually profitable, even though its primary form may be material. For those who belong to the heavenlies, even daily mercies are calculated to have spiritual significance.

Since the Lord Jesus assured us that our heavenly Father would always provide food and clothing, there is a sense in which such benefits may be classified as spiritual. A car in itself is not a blessing, but it can be made so if it is used for the Lord's service as well. Finance is only filthy lucre' when it responds to human greed. In itself this world's currency is far from spiritual, but it is given heavenly values when it is used for God. How else can we explain the fact that Paul described the gifts sent to him by the Philippians as "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God"? (Phil. 4:18). What can be more spiritual than fragrant sacrifices for God's good pleasure? God helping, we will continue in our next issue.

Praying that we be more and more earnest and honest in our hearts before the Father, to enter experientially into the spiritual blessings He hath foreordained for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, giving it the supreme priority in our life and walk before Him, in the latter half of 2008,

Eph. 2:6-8,10 1Cor.2:9,10 Deut.7:9

I remain, Yours in His grace, K. PHILLIP

JEHOVAH - JIREH - 2 BAKHT SINGH

It is interesting to note that the very same site where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac became the site of the temple which was built by Solomon. It is very near to Calvary where the Lord was crucified. Thus we see that God showed Abraham the meaning of the true sacrifice which God the Father was going to make by offering up His only Son to die for our sins upon the cross. Through Abraham God intended that many people should understand the meaning of the cross. But no one can do it through their intellect or through argument, without the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit and without active faith.

Isaac had been born to Abraham in his old age. Abraham could have argued, "Why should God ask me to offer up my only son born after twenty - five years of waiting?" Yet, he did not question God, or ask for any reason or explanation. Without even consulting his wife or son he took Isaac to Mount Moriah. In Genesis 22 we find no mention of Sarah. So we can safely infer that Abraham ever mentioned the matter to her. Perhaps he guessed that if he gave her the slightest hint of his intention she would start weeping, and might even hinder him from obeying God. It is not always wise for you to tell every secret to your wife, as many husbands do. Perhaps Sarah might have questioned Abraham where he was going. I do not think he would have told a lie to her. He might have said, "God has spoken to me, and I am going to Mount Moriah". Isaac also was beautifully obedient to his father. If we also could obey God in the same way, it would bring us also very near to God.

On the way Isaac questioned Abraham, "Father, here is the wood and the fire; but where is the lamb?" By faith Abraham replied, "The Lord will provide". If we believe God He will surely provide all things for us, but not till we are willing to believe in our hearts that the Lord will provide. There was something more in Abraham's words. Prophetically he was saying that God would provide a lamb not only for Abraham but for all sinners. Abraham knew that in God's sight a sacrifice was necessary, however he might not have understood why God was asking him to make Isaac to be that sacrifice. We read in Genesis 18 that when God intended to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He told Abraham that He was willing to spare the cities if there were at least a few righteous men in them. That morning when Abraham saw the smoke of the cities going up like the smoke of a furnace, he knew that those few righteous men had not been found. Abraham could also see that he himself as well was only a sinner before God. He further understood by revelation that God wanted to make him righteous for eternity, and for this purpose someone with a pure life had to die in his place.

The need of a sacrifice is taught to us in the story of Adam and Eve. They felt they could cover their nakedness by clothing themselves with fig leaves. They did not know that their own works and their own righteousness would never be able to cover the nakedness caused by their sin. When God actually came to meet them they realized how utterly inadequate all their efforts had been. Then God provided them coats of skin. For this purpose first an animal had to be killed; it had to be sacrificed. Thus Adam and Eve were made to understand the need of a sacrifice.

Again in the story of Abel we find the same principle emphasized. Abel knew that someone more righteous than himself had to be sacrificed and that is why he brought of his flock for a burnt offering.

In the same way, Abraham knew that even though God had appeared to him many times and blessed him in many ways, yet he lacked something; he was not yet righteous before God. The longing to become truly righteous and acceptable to God was increasing in his heart. So he must have prayed, "O Lord, make me righteous in Thy sight, and for this purpose prepare Yourself a

sacrifice on my behalf".

Abraham was willing to offer his only son Isaac, the son of his old age, who was so precious to him. God was revealing to Abraham that when he as a man loved his son so much, how much more God loved His only Son and how great was His love for the world which constrained Him to offer His beloved Son for the sins of men. God was asking Abraham to offer his only son to show his love for God, and in this way become partaker of God's own perfect love.

Abraham could have asked many questions , and could have argued with God, but he did not; he obeyed implicitly. Those who argue with God will never have the experience of salvation. It is only when you stop arguing and start believing and obeying God implicitly that you will receive God's full blessing. There are some people who think too much of their education and so remain spiritually blind. They think and reason and argue. They do not know that the things of God cannot be understood by human reasoning.

Abraham rose above human affection and human reasoning to obey God implicitly. He had learnt a very precious lesson. That is why God planned and purposed to make him abundantly fruitful. Abraham knew that if he obeyed God one day he would also know the meaning of "Jehovah-Jireh" - "God will provide". That is why without being overcome by feelings of sorrow he had taken Isaac to Mount Moriah for the sacrifice.

Abraham had to learn the lesson that unless someone died, he himself would never become righteous. It is true that Abraham already had strong faith in God; but he still had to learn what the meaning of true righteousness was and how a sinner could become righteous before God . God had appeared to Abraham several times, and he had been obedient to God in every matter; yet he was not righteous before God. He needed a sacrifice, a Person Who would die in his place. This was a new revelation to him and God was leading him into it step by step.
(To be contd.)

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