

God's Covenant with Abraham



Relationship with God (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week I'm speaking on the theme of personal relationships and, in particular, what it means to have a personal relationship with God.

Yesterday I explained that there is only one basis on which God will enter into a permanent relationship with man—a covenant based upon a sacrifice. Simply stated, relationship with God must be based on a covenant and a covenant must be based on a sacrifice..

Today I'm going to speak about the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15. This is a most beautiful and detailed picture of how God enters into covenant with man. I'll commence by reading verses 6–18 of this chapter:

> "Then he [that's Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. And [the Lord] said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.' And [Abraham] said, 'O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?' So [the Lord] said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, and a three-year-old female goat, and a three-year-old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' Then [Abraham] brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. And God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 'But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 'And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 'Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.'" And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a

> smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land...'" (NAS)

That's a very unusual description. Something that's, I suppose, almost limited to the Bible, of how God enters into a relationship with man. It's based on covenant. The covenant requires the sacrifice.

Let me just point out a few things about that passage. It started when Abraham said, "How may I know? How may I know, God, that You will fulfill Your promise to me?" And God's answer was He made a covenant. We need to understand this, that the final commitment of God to do whatever He's promised is in a covenant. Once God has made a covenant, there is nothing more He can do to commit Himself. Covenant is final commitment.

Then we need to consider what was done with those sacrifices. Abraham had to kill the animals, cut their bodies in two and then he walked between the pieces of the sacrifice. And yet, more remarkable, God Himself, in the person of that flaming torch, came down from heaven and He, too, in His turn, passed between the pieces of the sacrifice. So the covenant was made, or as they say in Hebrew, "the covenant was cut," when the two parties to it passed between the pieces of the sacrifice. What does that mean? The sacrifice represented the death of each party. As each one passed through the sacrifice, he was saying, in effect, "That's my death. At this point, I lay down my life. Now that I am in covenant, I no longer live for myself, I live for the one with whom I have entered into covenant."

Yesterday we pointed out the epistle to the Hebrews says a covenant is not valid while men remain alive. It takes death to make the covenant valid. Then just think of that smoking oven and that flaming torch. What a darkness came over Abraham at that moment. Not merely the darkness of night, but the darkness of the smoke from the oven. But in the midst of that darkness there was just one thing that brought light. That flaming torch. That flaming torch reminds us of the seven lamps of fire before the throne that John saw in Revelation 4. It's God in the person of the Holy Spirit. So God Himself came down and passed between those pieces. Doesn't it amaze you that God would go to such lengths and be so definite and so specific and, in a certain sense, so down to earth, to enter into a personal relationship with a man?

What was the meaning of that sacrifice? That passing between the pieces. What was God saying to Abraham? What was Abraham saying to God? The truth is that each, at that point, renounced his life in favor of the other. Each said, "From now on, my life has not the primary call on me, your life is more important than mine. I'm going to live for you. I've renounced my own life to do so."

Let's look back again, for a moment, to the description of the Lord and Abraham entering into covenant. I want to draw some lessons from it, lessons that concern you and me just as much in our relationship with God today. First of all, our total spiritual experience includes times of darkness. Christianity is not a religion that just works in fair weather and when things are going well and everything seems right. Christianity is a religion for all seasons.

Abraham was not backslidden, nor was he a weak or immature believer. He was a strong, committed follower of the Lord. And yet he went through his time of darkness. And there will come, nearly always in the life of every committed believer, a time of darkness. If you're in such a time just now, I want to speak a word of encouragement to you. Don't assume that you've failed God or you're backslidden, or that God has failed you. God can trust you in that darkness. Maybe if you were a younger or a less mature believer, God couldn't trust you. So bear in mind that darkness is part of our total Christian experience but there is that in Christianity which will take us through the darkness into victory.

Secondly, that oven speaks of suffering. It speaks of God's purifying fire. Many places in the Scripture an oven or a furnace is a type of intense suffering. For instance, God said to Israel in Isaiah 48:10:

> "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." (NAS)

You say, "God, why do I have to be in this furnace?" God says, "Because the furnace does things for you that nothing else will ever do."

In Malachi, God promised the descendants of Levi, His priest, that He would refine them as silver is refined and as gold is refined. And when God wants to bring forth a priest, He has to put him through the refining furnace of affliction. And so Abraham, too, had to have that experience of the oven. The oven, in a sense, was a preview of the affliction of his people that was going to follow in Egypt. But somehow God, it seems to me, that God permitted Abraham a preview, just a foretaste, because where the children were to go, the father had to understand something of what they were to pass through. So bear in mind that the furnace of affliction doesn't mean you're out of the will of God. It means that affliction is doing something for you, refining you and purifying you in a

way that nothing else will ever do.

Let me give you that beautiful word that God gave to Israel just once more: "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." The King James version says, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." How you react in the furnace is going to determine how God will deal with you.

Then the third and the final lesson is this: that in the midst of that darkness, that flaming torch, which was the supernatural presence of God, cast light only on one thing: the emblems of the sacrifice, which were the basis of the covenant. In other words, in times of great darkness it may happen that God will illuminate nothing for you. He won't let you know why you're there or what's going to happen next, but He'll illuminate just one thing for you: the sacrifice, which is the emblem of the covenant, because God wants you to come to the place in your experience where you know that when He made a covenant, He committed Himself, that there is nothing more that God can do to commit Himself than to make that covenant.

I'm reminded of the words of Paul in Romans 8:32:

> "He that did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (NAS)

That's the final sacrifice. It's the death of God's Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross for our sins. And if you can see nothing else, if there's darkness all around you, as long as you can see that sacrifice that Jesus died, then you know that God is on your side. Paul says just a little later in Romans 8:

> "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (NAS)

That's a good question! How can you know that God is for you? You can know it this way: by making the same commitment to God that God has made to you. And on that commitment God will receive you into covenant relationship with Himself.

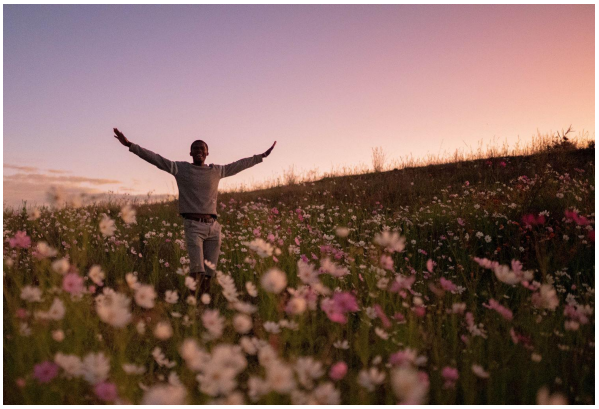
Well, our time is up for the day. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow my theme will be "Friendship with God." I'll be speaking further about the relationship that developed between God and Abraham out of the covenant that they made with each other.

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



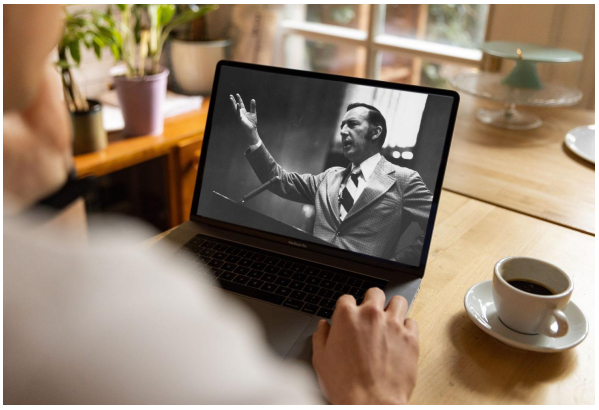
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries