

Friendship with God



Relationship with God (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you once more. I've been speaking to you this week on covenant as the basis for an enduring personal relationship with God.

Yesterday, I described how God entered into covenant with Abraham as recorded in Genesis 15. You will recall how Abraham had to take the sacrificial animals, kill them, divide the bodies in two, and then Abraham himself passed through those pieces and the Lord, in the form of that flaming torch, passed through likewise. And through passing through the pieces of the sacrifice the Lord and Abraham entered into covenant one with another. Those sacrificed animals spoke of death, the death of those who entered into the covenant. The way into the covenant, then, is through death, laying down your life.

Now I want to trace today the outworking of that covenant in history and also in the personal relationship that it produced between God and Abraham. I've expressed this as clearly and as briefly as I know how in my book, The Marriage Covenant, so I'm going to read to you some paragraphs from that book. These paragraphs explain the outworking in history of the covenant the Lord made with Abraham.

> "The death of the sacrificed animal is physical, but it symbolizes another form of death for the one who offers the sacrifice and passes through the pieces. The one who does this hereby renounces all right, from that moment, to live for himself. As each party passes through the pieces of the sacrifice, he says, in effect, to the other: 'If need be, I will die for you. From now on, your interests take precedence over my own. If I have anything you need but cannot supply, then my supply becomes your supply. I no longer live for myself, I live for you.'
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> In God's sight, this act of making a covenant is no empty ritual. It is a solemn and sacred commitment. If we trace through history the course of events that resulted from the Lord's covenant with Abram, we see that each party had to make good the commitment which the covenant represented.

> Some years later, when Abram had become Abraham, God said to him: 'I want your son Isaac—your only son. The most precious thing you have is no longer yours, because you and I are in covenant. It is mine.' To his eternal credit, Abraham did not falter. He was willing to offer up even Isaac. Only at the last moment did the Lord intervene directly from heaven and stop him from actually slaying his son.
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> However, that is not the end of the story. God had also committed Himself to Abraham. Two thousand years later God, in His turn, fulfilled His part of the covenant. To meet the need of Abraham and his descendants, God offered up His only Son. But this time there was no last minute reprieve. On the cross, Jesus laid down His life as the full price of redemption for Abraham and all his descendants. That act was the outcome of the commitment that God and Abram had made to each other on that fateful night, two thousand years earlier, when they passed between those pieces of the sacrifice. All that followed from then on in the course of history was determined by their covenant.
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> So solemn, so total, and so irrevocable is the commitment that is made in a covenant."

Well, that was the practical outworking of that covenant in history. Each person, God and Abraham, had made a total commitment. There came a time when God called on Abraham to fulfill his commitment and offer Isaac. But God's commitment was just as total as Abraham's. So, two thousand years later the other side of the covenant came into fore—God gave up His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that the commitment you make to God determines the measure of God's commitment to you. Total commitment to God calls for total commitment from God. That's the very essence of covenant.

However, that covenant also had a further practical effect on Abraham's personal relationship with God. In the epistle of James 2, James is speaking about what Abraham did when he offered up Isaac and the result. He says this:

> "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God." (NAS)

Through that covenant commitment and through its outworking in the offering up of Isaac, Abraham was reckoned as God's friend. That's a very significant and a very honorable title. The lesson is this: covenant is the door to true friendship. When two men make a covenant with one another, when two persons make covenant and live out the terms of their covenant, that is true friendship.

Alas, the world today the word "friend" has been watered down. It's a very cheap word. And friendship can be a very cheap thing. But I want you to know that God's standard of friendship has not changed. For God, friendship is based on covenant commitment. Through covenant commitment, Abraham became a friend of God. Under the new covenant, Jesus wants to bring us into the same relationship with Him, as His friends, that Abraham entered into under the old covenant. In John 15:15, Jesus says to His disciples:

> "No longer do I call you slaves... but I have called you friends..." (NAS)

That's a promotion, from being a slave to a friend. But we need to understand, for ourselves just as much as for Abraham, that friendship is not cheap. It costs something to be a friend of Jesus. For us the basis is the same as it was for Abraham. It's covenant commitment. Jesus laid down His life when He said, "Greater love hath no man than this: that he lay down his life for his friend." But remember, if we are to be Jesus' friends, we have to lay down our life for Him. It's a two-way commitment.

In the first epistle of John 1:3, John says this:

> "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (NAS)

In other words, the gospel is an invitation from the Godhead to share the fellowship that Father and Son share with one another. That word "fellowship" in Greek is koinonia. It is a very important word in New Testament Greek. It means, literally, sharing in common. So fellowship is sharing in common. We are invited to share the same relationship that God the Father and God the Son have together. And one thing is very clear about this relationship: God the Father and God the Son have everything in common. Neither withholds

anything from the other. In John 17:10, Jesus is speaking to the Father and He says this:

> "And all [things that are] mine are thine, and thine are mine..." (KJV)

That's perfect koinonia, perfect fellowship, the perfect sharing of all things. It's the perfect pattern of relationship that God wants to bring us into. There has to be a certain order. The one who is speaking has to put "mine" before "thine." Jesus said, "Everything that I have is yours." And on the basis of that He was able to go on and say, "And everything you have is Mine." Now, if we want that kind of relationship, we have to follow the same order. We have to say to the Lord, "Lord, everything I have is yours. I withhold nothing. I make a total, unreserved commitment." And once you can say that "all mine are Thine," then you can also know "all Thine are mine." If you make total commitment to God, God responds with total commitment to you. Let me say what I've said already. The measure of God's commitment to you is determined by the measure of your commitment to God. God doesn't make half-way commitments and He doesn't want half-way commitments. God has established the price. He has laid down the price for that relationship. It is: everything you have. "He that forsaketh not all that he has, cannot be My disciple."

Now, you say, "That sounds hard." Well, it's realistic. Let me tell you some good news. There are two facts about God's kingdom. First of all, God never has a sale. He never reduces the price on any item. If you want the relationship that Peter and Paul and John had with the Lord, you've got to pay what they paid. God hasn't offered a sale. But the other side is good news: In God's kingdom there's no inflation. The price has never gone up, it's never gone down, it's still the same. The outcome of that commitment is peace, security, joy. Do you want it? You have to make the decision. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me." Notice the order: you give Jesus your supper and then He gives you His. "All mine are Thine" and so "all Thine are mine." Are you willing to make that kind of a commitment to God?

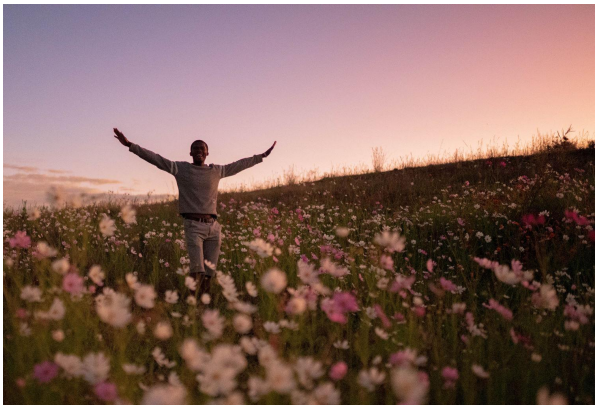
Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Today I've been speaking about friendship with God, tomorrow I want to go one step further and talk about "Union with God."

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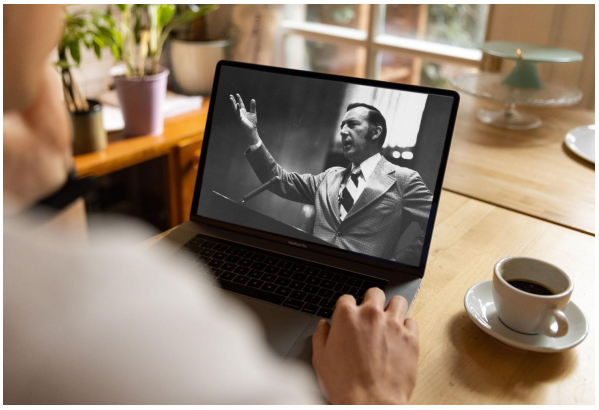
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