



Devotional Thoughts :: Abraham, My Friend_43

Abraham, My Friend_43 - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/2 11:00

Abraham, My Friend
The Making of a Praying Man_43

Shall I hide from Abraham...

We come now to the passage which was in my mind when we first began this journey, almost a year ago.

It seems that the primary purpose of the visit to Abraham's tent was Sarah's annunciation; the specific promise and date of the birth of Isaac. However, as Abraham continues to 'wait upon' his guests another theme arises. Their visit was concluded and the visitors leave. Abraham decides to accompany them on the initial part of their journey. **And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;** (Gen 18:16-17 KJV) What an amazing narrative begins in these simple words.

In some middle-eastern cultures you continued to have responsibility for your guests while 'your food is in their bellies'. I recall personally a meal with a Nepali family in NE India where they insisted, Nepali style, in accompanying their guest back to the place they slept in; a round journey of some 10 miles. The hosts could not be persuaded to let the guests leave unaccompanied. It is probably in this kind of setting that Abraham accompanies his guests on the first part of their journey. If he had not this account would never have been written.

Somewhere on their journey **...LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."** (Gen 18:17-19 NASB)) I want to understand how God is thinking here. There are vital secrets of intercession being laid down here. Abraham is about to be drawn into vital responsibility in the outworking of God's purposes. Perhaps at some time he asked the question, why me?

It's a good question. **Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?** (Joh 14:22 KJV) Why us and not them? Why me and not him? The answer of Christ is simple but significant. We are not asking the question 'why should I have been saved and not another?' That's another good question, but one without any answer in the main. Judas (also known as Thaddeus and Lebbeus) has heard the answer to his question, but Christ will repeat it and add a further explanation. Christ has promised a coming 'day' and declares that **In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.** (Joh 14:20-21 Darby)

I want to split this verse to make my point. The initial experience is to be one of the indwelling God. None of this is primarily dependent upon the believer but is the free gift of the God. The Father would fulfil His promise to the Son and the Son would fulfil His promise to the waiting disciples (Acts 2:33). All this would be because of the Son's achievement on the cross; there is no human contribution thus far. But the words move on to link human condition with divine blessing; **He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.** This speaks to me of something more. The disciples' obedience is a consequence of their love to God, but that obedience is also a condition of God's self revelation.

It is such an obvious statement but we will make it nevertheless; some blessings are unconditional and some blessings are very conditional. Christ's self-disclosure, his 'manifesting of himself', to the disciples was to be dependent upon their obedience to what He had said to them. This is a cycle that we have seen frequently in the steps of Abraham's faith. God 'manifests Himself' to Abraham; that manifestation always brings with it a further revelation of the person of God, and always an implication for the way in which Abraham is to live his life. Abraham obeys, and the obedience fulfil

s the unspoken condition for the next revelation of God's person. As Abraham obeys he grows and his growing capacities him for further revelation of God's person. This is the truth contained in the words of Christ to his disciples. The man who keeps the words that Christ has spoken to him does so because he loves Christ. Those who love Christ (and reveal it in their obedience) are loved by the Father and the Son and are thereby capacitated to receive further revelation of His person.

Perhaps the simplicity of it confused Judas-Thaddeus. Surely it has to be more complicated than this? Surely it has to do with destiny and gifting and education and training and ... Apparently not. It is this simple; **...If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.** (Joh 14:23 Darby) He repeats the word in verses 23 and 24 *anyone*. Surely this is for apostles and pastors and teachers? Surely this is for Spurgeons and Campbell Morgans and Tozers and Ravenhills? As we sometimes say in our modern idiom 'what part of don't you understand?' But do note that there is a means of identifying the genuine from the fake here; **If any one love me, he will keep my word.** Faith without works is dead, and so is love. And note the order, we do not love Him because we keep His word, we keep his word because we love Him, we do not keep His word in order to love Him, we keep His word because we do love Him. If we don't keep His word it is because we do not love Him.

The Lord goes on to make an astonishing statement to those who genuinely love Him; **...we will come to him and make our home with him.**"(Joh 14:23 RSVA) 'Our home', what an extraordinary statement, our 'abiding place'. I am not suggesting that the Father and the Son will absent themselves if the conditions change but just emphasizing 'residence' over 'experience'. Our crisis experiences of God are vital but this is 'state'; and this is wonderfully personal. Most of the promises of the coming of the Spirit were corporate and use the plural 'you', but this is intensely personal; we will come to him and will create our dwelling place with him. It was to these men that Jesus, in the next chapter, declared; **Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.** (Joh 15:14-15 KJV) No longer 'bond-slaves' but 'friends'.

God reveals what He is really like to His friends; don't we all? Jehovah has enjoyed the love and care of his host Abraham, and now the time has come to move on, but this proximity and intimacy provides Him with the opportunity to reveal secrets to Abraham. The narrative speaks of Abraham's destiny; **... Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?** (Gen 18:18 KJV) This man who is to become the source of such blessing is now to become the bearer of a terrible secret. What will he do with it? We shall have a glimpse into the heart of this man before our story is complete.

The next verse has a certain ambiguity. The more modern versions follow the line of the old American Standard Version; **For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. (Gen 18:19 ASV)** where the word 'known' has the sense it often carries in scripture of 'acknowledging' or 'recognizing'. The ESV uses 'chosen' here to fix the sense. God has 'acknowledged' him as the man through whom God will accomplish His purposes. In later times such a man would have been 'appointed' publicly as God's agent. The blessings for all nations of verse 18 would only be possible through the faithfulness of God's man described in verse 19.

It is significant that it is at this stage of Abraham's pilgrimage that he becomes a privy counsellor. Perhaps that title is not well known to 'republican' readers of this column. The Privy Council was a body of the monarch's most trusted servants. If you are interested in the antiquated activities of a constitutional monarchy you can read The Oath of a Privy Counsellor. The twin elements are utter and absolute loyalty to the person of the monarch in thought, word and deed, and the promise to *keep secret all matters committed and revealed unto you*. It was not at the beginning of his journey that Abraham was admitted into the 'secret of the LORD'. It reminds us of the words we have quoted before; **I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.** (Joh 16:12 KJV) God had 'proved' Abraham in many a trial. He knew that Abraham was to be trusted. There is an old saying about Moses; he spent 40 years learning to be a somebody, 40 years learning to be a nobody, and 40 years learning what God can do with a somebody who is prepared to be a nobody. Abraham had turned his back on the comfort of Ur and the fabulous wealth offered by Sodom. His relationship with his God was in covenant; not based upon a passing experience but in solemn binding. He has allowed a continual stripping away of every human prop. Family, allies, wealth, status; even to the symbolic stripping away of his life and power. He had chosen, again and again, God's way. Now God acknowledges him as His own man, He will draw him into hidden things, and will place upon him responsibilities that no-one else will know of. He has become Abraham, the Friend of God. It has been a long journey, but he is ready now to begin his work.

Re: Abraham, My Friend_43 - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/11/9 14:42

Everything you wrote here Br. Ron describes the relationship one has with God. You have captured many elements of what it means to have a relationship with God. Yet you assert in other posts that there remains a difference between the relationship that Abraham had with God and the relationship you have with God. What distinction according to Scripture, can be illustrated, that affirms the difference that you teach?

In Christ
Jeff