

CHAPTER 10

ABRAHAM'S BLESSINGS ARE YOURS (e³)

"And he said, 'Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?' So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two" (Genesis 15:8-10).

"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram..." (Genesis 15:17-18).

There is a recurring message that runs from Genesis to Revelation; it is that God has made a covenant with Abraham and with his seed, a covenant which He remembers forever. It is a covenant of blessing. It is a sacred covenant of friendship which was established with blood; therefore, it is the "blood covenant of friendship" between God and Abraham.

This is good news! It is news that every Christian should be excited about, but little is known in twenty-first century Christianity regarding either the existence or the sacredness of this blood covenant of friendship.

A number of years ago I came across a book by Dr. H. Clay Trumbull entitled *The Blood Covenant* (1). That book not only illuminated for me the sacredness of a "blood covenant" but the importance of the covenant that God cut with Abraham and with his seed. In his book, Dr. Trumbull presents overwhelming evidence that there has been a blood covenant practiced by all primitive people from time immemorial; and because the practice of the blood covenant is so widespread, it has the marks of an original revelation from God (1).

UNDERSTANDING THE BLOOD COVENANT

Sir Henry Stanley and Doctor David Livingston were two men who stirred the imagination of English speaking peoples throughout the world in the middle part of the nineteenth century. Doctor Livingston was a Scottish missionary who left Scotland in 1841 to explore the continent of Africa. His mission was to open the interior of Africa to colonization, extend the Gospel of Jesus Christ in that same region, and abolish the African slave trade. After nearly fifteen years in Africa, he returned to England on a furlough. Then in 1866, he departed on his last and most famous exploration of the Dark Continent. Little was heard from Livingston during the next five years, and many became concerned for his safety. In 1871, Henry Morton Stanley, a reporter for the New York Herald, embarked on a mission to Africa to find Dr. Livingston. Upon finding him near lake Tanganyika, Stanley uttered his now famous words, "Doctor Livingston, I presume?" Stanley, in his books describing his African journeys, relates that he cut a blood covenant of friendship with various African tribes more than fifty times.

On Stanley's first trip to Africa, he came in contact with a powerful equatorial tribe. They were very war-like, but Stanley was not in a position to fight them. Finally, his interpreter asked him why he didn't make a blood covenant with the chieftain of the tribe. Stanley asked what making a blood covenant would involve, and was told that it meant drinking each other's blood. Stanley revolted from such a rite, but conditions kept growing worse, until finally the young African man asked again why he didn't cut a blood covenant of friendship with the old chieftain. Stanley asked what the results of such a covenant would be, and the interpreter explained. "Everything the chieftain has will be yours if you need it."

This appealed to Stanley and he investigated further, after several days of negotiation, he and the chieftain arrived at a covenant. Stanley was in poor health, and he had brought along a goat to provide milk for his nourishment, but during the negotiations the old chieftain seemed to want nothing

but Stanley's goat. Finally Stanley gave up the goat, and in return the old chieftain handed him his seven-foot copper-wound spear. (Stanley thought he had been cheated, but he found later that wherever he went in Africa with the old chieftain's spear, every tribe bowed and submitted to him.)

When the negotiations were complete, two men were selected as substitutes for Stanley and the chief. Then a priest stepped forward with a cup of wine, made an incision in both men's wrist, and let the blood drip into the cup of wine. Then the wine was stirred and the two men's blood was mixed. As the two substitutes drank from the cup, the act bound Stanley and the chieftain, as well as Stanley's men and the chieftain's warriors, into a blood brotherhood that was indissoluble.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the old chieftain stepped forward and shouted, "Come, buy and sell with Stanley, for he is our blood brother." A few hours before, Stanley's men had to stand guard over their bales of cotton cloth and bags of trinkets, but now he could leave his goods lying in the roadway and nothing would be disturbed. For anyone to steal from his or her blood brother was a death penalty. The old chieftain couldn't do enough for his newfound brother. Stanley couldn't understand the sacredness of it, and years later wondered about it.

There was another very important feature of this ceremony. As soon as the two young men had drunk each other's blood, a priest stepped forward and pronounced the most awful curses that Stanley had ever heard—curses that were to come upon Stanley and his men if they broke the covenant. Then Stanley's interpreter stepped forward and pronounced the curses that would come upon the old king, his wife, his children and his tribe if they broke the covenant with Stanley (2).

While the method of cutting the blood covenant varies from region to region, in many places the method is similar to that described above by Stanley. In some societies, rather than drinking the blood, those making a covenant may put their wrists together or touch their tongues to the blood flowing from each other's incision as a means of consummating the covenant. In South America, primitive tribes cut a blood covenant in a manner similar to that in Genesis (Genesis 15:9&10), by slaying the sacrificial animal, cutting it in half and laying the two halves of the animal opposite each other. Then both of the individuals who are cutting the covenant walk between the two halves of the slain animal to consummate the blood covenant (1). However, it is not the method used that is important; it is the fact that whenever the blood covenant was pronounced, it was considered a sacred agreement to be honored by the individuals partaking in it, and most often the penalty for breaking the covenant was death. But even more important, the moment the blood covenant ceremony is consummated everything that a blood covenant brother owns is at the disposal of his covenant brother, if he needs it. Neither brother however, would ever think to ask anything of the other, unless he was driven by circumstances to require it.

GENESIS—THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOK IN THE BIBLE!

Dr. Henry Morris, a scientist and biblical scholar, makes a strong case that the book of Genesis is the most important book in the Bible. He observes that if the book of Genesis were removed from the Bible, the rest of the Bible would make no sense. Genesis describes to us the origin of the universe, the origin of life on the earth, the origin of evil, the origin of the Jewish people...and gives meaning to life itself. The book of Genesis devotes more than half of its fifty chapters to the call of God upon one individual, a rancher and businessman named Abram. In fact, in the book of Genesis, God made some sixty promises to this man.

GOD CALLED ABRAHAM AND HIS OFFSPRING TO BE HIS PEOPLE

Two thousand years after the fall of mankind and four hundred years after the Flood, the human race were worshipping idols again. But God had a plan; He called a man named Abram (Abraham's name before God changed it) to leave his home in idolatrous Mesopotamia and go to a land where He would make him the father of many nations.

Then twenty-five years after God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia to establish the Hebrew nation, the greatest event in human history until the birth of Christ took place: God cut a blood covenant

with Abraham (Genesis 15:7-18). The Hebrew word for covenant "*beriyth*" means "to cut." It suggests an incision where blood flows, thus the name "blood covenant." The "blood covenant of friendship" that God cut with Abraham is referred to in scripture as the Abrahamic Covenant, and because of it, Abraham is the only man in the Old Testament called the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8).

It is important for Christians to understand the Abrahamic Covenant, because it is the legal foundation upon which every blessing which God has promised to the Jew and the Christian is based.

GOD CUTS A "BLOOD COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP" WITH ABRAHAM

The fifteenth chapter of Genesis is one of the most important chapters in the most important book of the Old Testament because it depicts the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant. God came to Abram in a vision and said, "Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward"(Genesis 15:1). But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Genesis15:2). Let me paraphrase Abram's response: "So if you give me the whole world, what good is it to me, for I have no descendant through whom I may establish my posterity." So God said, "...but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then God took Abram outside his tent and said, "Count the stars if you are able to number them... So shall your descendants be" (Genesis 15:4&5). And Abram "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). He received God's promise by faith.

Two verses later God said, "As for me, bring a three year old heifer...and a young pigeon." Abram brought them and cut them in two down the middle, and he placed each piece opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in two (Genesis 15:9&10). In the evening, God appeared as a smoking oven and a burning torch and passed between the pieces, consuming the offering, to consummate the "blood covenant of friendship" with Abram (Genesis 15:9-12&18).

You see, God is a spirit. He didn't have any blood, so He had Abram shed the blood of innocent animals as a substitute for His blood. And after consuming the offering by fire, God proclaimed that He had made a covenant with Abram (Genesis 15:18).

ABRAHAM CUTS THE BLOOD COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God appeared to him and changed his name from *Abram*, meaning "exalted father," to *Abraham*, meaning "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:1-6). Then God commanded Abraham and his male descendants to consummate the "blood covenant of friendship" with their own blood, by cutting the flesh of their foreskin (circumcision). God said that their circumcision would be the sign of an everlasting covenant between Him and Abraham and his descendants, and that He would be their God (Genesis 17:7-14). God further proclaimed to Abraham that he was to no longer call his wife by the name *Sarai*, but by the name Sarah, and that He would bless Sarah and through her give Abraham the son which He had promised to him some twenty-five years earlier. Then God told Abraham to name his son Isaac, and proclaimed that He would establish His covenant with Isaac as an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:19&21).

Abraham cut the blood covenant of friendship with God with his own blood, and now everything that God possessed was Abraham's and everything that Abraham had was God's...even his life. (1)

ABRAHAM RECEIVED THE PROMISED SON

Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born. Finally, after twenty-five years, Abraham had received his most cherished possession, a son from his own body, by his wife Sarah. Isaac was the "son of promise" who would assure Abraham's posterity—a son through which Abraham's name would be preserved to future generations (Gen. 21:1-7).

GOD TESTS ABRAHAM'S FAITH

Have you ever wondered why God tested Abraham? When God cut the covenant (old covenant) with Abraham, all the angels of heaven and all the demons of hell knew that God was capable of keeping His part of the covenant; but could and would Abraham keep his part of the covenant?

If Abraham would not have kept the covenant, then no legal agreement between God and Abraham would have existed; and without a covenant with a man, God would have no legal basis to provide mankind a substitute sacrifice, a redeemer to pay the price for man's transgression.

Justice demanded that God test Abraham's ability to keep the covenant; otherwise Satan (the god of this world) would have a legal claim against God's right to provide mankind a Redeemer. Abraham had to prove to the angels of heaven and the demons of hell that he would keep the covenant. Abraham had to prove that everything he possessed was God's should God require it.

THE TESTING OF ABRAHAM

Abraham had believed God for a son for some twenty-five years before Isaac was born. Then when Isaac was in his late teens, God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his only son Isaac on a mountain as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:1&2).

When they arrived at the mountain which God had shown them, Isaac said to Abraham, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7).

Abraham prophetically says, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8). God provided a lamb for Himself in the person of Jesus Christ the Son of God. John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus to be "...The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In the book of Revelation, Jesus is proclaimed to be "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

ABRAHAM FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

The writer of Hebrews tells us that when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mountain, Abraham's faith reasoned that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead in order to keep the covenant (Hebrews 11:19). But Satan, no doubt, tried to steal God's Word out of Abraham's heart. Anyone who has attempted to believe God under difficult circumstances knows the mind games that the devil plays in order to get a believer to doubt God. I am sure that Abraham went through the same kind of mental testing that you and I do. I can just imagine some of the thoughts that went through Abraham's mind during that three-day trip to Mount Moriah: *What are you going to tell Sarah when you come home without Isaac?...The authorities will have you in jail as soon as you get home!...Don't you remember what God said to Cain when he killed Abel?*

ABRAHAM PASSED THE TEST

As Abraham took the knife to slay his son Isaac, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Genesis 22:12). After Abraham passed the test, the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son-" (Genesis 22:15-16). Then God made more promises to Abraham and his seed (Genesis 22:17-18):

- ✚ I will bless you...
- ✚ I will multiply your descendants...
- ✚ Your descendants shall possess the gates of their enemy...
- ✚ In your seed (singular), all nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.

"...because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son-" (Genesis 22:16)—God Himself, the entire corporate power of heaven, became the surety of the Abrahamic Covenant. God had found, in Abraham, a man that would keep the covenant, a man with whom He could legally enter into relationship with mankind, and a man through whom he could legally bring the promised Redeemer into the earth.

GOD GAVE THE ISRAELITES THE LAW

After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, He made them a sovereign nation; and then through Moses, He instituted the Law and gave them a system of sacrifices which tied the "blessings of Abraham" to the keeping of the Law. He did this in order to preserve the Jewish people by providing a method by which they could atone for their sin until the promised Redeemer would come.

WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED FROM THE CURSE

God proclaimed that the Abrahamic Covenant was an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:7&19). Everlasting means that the Abrahamic Covenant is still in effect today. Not only did God make a promise to Abraham and his seed, but He also swore an oath, so that by two unchangeable things—His promise and His oath—we might have great confidence in His covenant promises (Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:17-18).

Here is the exciting news: in the New Testament book of Galatians, Paul proclaims that **Christ** is the seed to which the Abrahamic promises were made. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to your seeds" as of many, but as of one "And to your Seed" who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). In this verse, Paul refers to the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 22:18. Then a few verses later, Paul makes it clear that if you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). What promise? The promise that God made to Abraham!

A few verses earlier Paul had proclaimed that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law," and that "the 'blessings of Abraham' might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith" (Galatians 3:13&14). The Gentiles in Christ Jesus are Christians, and the promise of the Spirit was that we Christians might receive the blessings of Abraham. How do we receive the blessings of Abraham? The same way we receive everything from God...**by faith**.

WHAT ARE THE BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM?

In his book entitled "WHAT ARE ABRAHAM'S BLESSINGS ANYWAY? Dr. Jay Snell state's "From Genesis to Revelation, the God of Scripture specifically singled out from the rest of humanity only one group of people, Abraham and his seed, to whom he specifically committed himself in the form of Sixty Promises. Because of this commitment, God embraced Abraham and his seed in a way in which he embraced no other group of people in recorded history." (3) Snell points out elsewhere that many of the sixty promises use the terms *ble*ss, *ble*ssed, or *ble*ssing, and that the root Hebrew word translated "bless, *ble*ssed, or *ble*ssing" is **barak** which "means to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc" (5). (Fecundity means to be fruitful in childbearing)

The "blessings of Abraham" are summarized in the first fourteen verses of the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. The first two verses tell us: "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God." Verses 3 to 14 summarize the "blessings of Abraham" that would come upon the Israelites if they would keep God's commandments. From these verses we can see that the "blessings of Abraham" promise the seed of Abraham:

- ✚ Success in Life
- ✚ Material wealth [at the very least having all our needs met]
- ✚ Physical health and longevity
- ✚ Spiritual life (right standing with God)
- ✚ Many Children

The "curses of the Law" are summarized in the last fifty-three verses of that same chapter. "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and his statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you" (Deuteronomy 28:15). Verses 16 to 68 describe the curses that would come

upon the Israelites and overtake them if they failed to observe God's commandments. From these verses we can see that the curse of the Law includes problems in every area of life:

- ✚ Poverty
- ✚ Oppression
- ✚ Defeat
- ✚ Spiritual death (separation from God)
- ✚ Disease and death

JEWES ARE TAUGHT TO SUCCEED

Jesus acknowledged that worldly men are often more shrewd in their generation (in dealing with the production of wealth) than spiritual men (Luke 16:8). But that was not necessarily so in the Old Testament. During the periods of history that the Israelites honored the God of the Covenant, the Jewish Patriarchs were very wealthy men. They attributed their wealth to the blessing that God had promised to Abraham and to his seed.

Even today, the Jewish people who live in the United States of America enjoy a greater degree of prosperity than the general population as a whole. The "Forbes Four Hundred" is a list published annually of the four hundred wealthiest people in America. Every year, fifteen to twenty-five percent of the names on that list are Jewish, yet the Jewish people represent only two and one half percent of the population of America (4).

The Jewish people are successful because they have been taught that they are the seed of Abraham, they are therefore heirs of the blessings that God promised to Abraham, and that God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his people. And perhaps most importantly, unlike many of us Gentiles, they have been taught that business is an honorable profession (4).

THEN WHY DON'T MORE CHRISTIANS ENJOY THE BLESSINGS?

If the Old Covenant saints enjoyed health, wealth, and salvation, and the New Covenant saints do not, then the New Covenant must not be as good as the Old Covenant. Wrong! The writer of Hebrews says the New Covenant is a better covenant based on better promises (Hebrews 8:6). Then the next question becomes ***why don't the majority of Christians live the abundant life of health and wealth as well as salvation?***

Since the blessings of Abraham are received **by faith**, we must conclude that Christians have not received the blessings of health and wealth because they do not have faith to receive these blessings. Most Christian denominations believe and teach that Christ has redeemed mankind from spiritual death, and therefore we may receive salvation of the soul, by faith; but not all believe and teach that we may receive prosperity and healing by faith. Since faith is information we receive from God to act upon, the reason most Christians do not have faith for prosperity and healing is that health and prosperity are never preached or taught in most churches. How then can the Christian have the faith to receive the blessings of Abraham, if they have never heard that the blessings of Abraham are and that they belong to them?

- (1) *The Blood Covenant*. Author: H. Clay Trumbull. Copyright ©1975 Impact Books, Inc. 137 W. Jefferson, Kirkland, MO. 63122. All Rights Reserved (pg 4,5,6,7,&10)
- (2) *The Blood Covenant*. Author: E.W.Kenyon Fourteenth Edition, Copyright ©1969 by Kenyon's Gospel Publishing House. (Page 11,12,13)
- (3) *What Are Abraham's Blessings Anyway?* Volume 1, Author: Jay Snell; Copyright ©1989 by Jay Snell Evangelistic Association, PO Box 59, Livingston, Texas 77351 (Pg 21)
- (4) *THOU SHALL PROSPER – Ten Commandments For Making Money*, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Daniel Lapin. All Rights reserved (Pg 10, 17)
- (5) *Theological World Book of the Old Testament* Vol. 1, (page 132)