

# Abraham's Faith

Genesis 22



Giovanni Francesco Barbieri

Abraham's great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God's servants **in all succeeding ages**. Abraham did not seek to excuse himself from doing the will of God. During that three days' journey he had sufficient time to reason, and to doubt God, if he was disposed to doubt. He might have reasoned that the slaying of his son would cause him to be looked upon as a murderer, a second Cain; that it would cause his teaching to be rejected and despised; and thus destroy his power to do good to his fellow men.

– *PP* 153.3

“Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.” James 2:23. And Paul says, “They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

Galatians 3:7. **But Abraham’s faith was made manifest by his works.** “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”

James 2:21, 22. There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, “Only believe in Christ, and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law.” But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience.

What should we do if it were not for these representative men that are presented before us, and the dealing of God with them? Our lines are not to be always cast in pleasant places. We shall be brought where we shall feel the test and proof of God. If we could know the history of everyone that is here in this house today, there would be some valuable experiences brought out where they followed the leadings of God irrespective of inclination. The God of heaven will test us to see if we appreciate the favor of God and believe His promises and will rely upon them irrespective of consequences.

– *4LtMs*, Ms 19, 1886, par. 18

Why this test of  
faith?

It was to impress Abraham's mind with the reality of the gospel, as well as to test his faith, that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony which he endured during the dark days of that fearful trial was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man's redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony and shame. (*PP* 154.2)

The angels who witnessed the humiliation and soul anguish of the Son of God were not permitted to interpose, as in the case of Isaac. There was no voice to cry, “It is enough.” To save the fallen race, the King of glory yielded up His life. What stronger proof can be given of the infinite compassion and love of God? “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32. (*PP* 154.2)

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan — the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out — is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation. (*PP* 154.3)



- To impress Abraham's mind with the reality of the gospel
- To test his faith
- To understand something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by God for man's redemption

- To benefit succeeding generations
- For the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds
- To prove his loyalty before all heaven
- To demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted
- To open more fully before sinless intelligences the plan of salvation

# The Consequences

- All heaven beheld with wonder and admiration Abraham's unfaltering obedience.
- All heaven applauded his fidelity.
- Satan's accusations were shown to be false.
- Showed that obedience will be rewarded
- Angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man's salvation.

# The Final Test

- **The believer has a final test:** “Day by day God works with him, perfecting the character that is to stand in the time of final test. And day by day the believer is working out before men and angels a sublime experiment, showing what the gospel can do for fallen human beings” (*AA* 483.1).
- **The close of probation has a final test:** “It is in a crisis that character is revealed. . . . a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The **great final test** comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul’s need to be supplied” (*COL* 412.1).

- **Saul had a final test**—“This victory over the Amalekites was the most brilliant victory that Saul had ever gained, and it served to rekindle the pride of heart that was his greatest peril. The divine edict devoting the enemies of God to utter destruction was but partially fulfilled. . . . Saul had now been subjected to the final test. His presumptuous disregard of the will of God, showing his determination to rule as an independent monarch, proved that he could not be trusted with royal power as the vicegerent of the Lord” (*PP* 629).

- **The Jewish leaders had a final test** — “They hated His example of truthfulness and piety and the elevated spirituality revealed in all He did. His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel” (*COL 293.3*).



- **Peter had a final test**—“Peter had failed when the test came, but again he was to have opportunity to prove his love for Christ. That he might be strengthened for the final test of his faith, the Saviour opened to him his future” (*DA 815.3*).

- The great controversy and **God's people have a final test**—“As Christ was glorified on the day of Pentecost, so will He again be glorified in the closing work of the gospel, when He shall prepare a people to stand the final test, in the closing conflict of the great controversy” (*RH*, November 29, 1892, par. 3).
- **The world has a final test:** “The final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God’” (*FLB* 339.2)

- **The Sabbath is the final test:** “The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. (*GC 605.2*)

# Angels Are Watching

- Day by day God works with him, perfecting the character that is to stand in the time of final test. And day by day the believer is working out **before men and angels** a sublime experiment, showing what the gospel can do for fallen human beings. (AA 483.1)

# True Love

Isaac had been trained in the fear of God to a life of obedience. And when he was forty years old, he submitted to have the God-fearing, experienced servant of his father choose for him. He believed that God would direct in regard to his obtaining a wife. (*ISP* 104.2)

If there is any subject which should be carefully considered and in which the counsel of older and more experienced persons should be sought, **it is the subject of marriage**; if ever the Bible was needed as a counselor, if ever divine guidance should be sought in prayer, it is before taking a step that binds persons together for life.

*(PP 175.4)*



The course which Abraham pursued in the education of Isaac, that caused him to love a life of noble obedience, is **recorded for the benefit of parents**, and should lead them to command their households after them. They should instruct their children to yield to, and respect, their authority. And they should feel that a responsibility rests upon them to guide the affections of their children, that they may be placed upon persons who their judgment would teach them would be suitable companions for their sons and their daughters. It is a sad fact that Satan controls the affections of the young to a great extent. And some parents feel that the affections should not be guided or restrained. The course pursued by Abraham is a rebuke to all such. (*ISP 105.1*)

Children now from fifteen to twenty generally consider themselves competent to make their own choice, without the consent of their parents. And they would look with astonishment, if it should be proposed to them to move in the fear of God and make the matter a subject of prayer. Isaac's case is left on record, **as an example for children** to imitate in after generations, especially those who profess to fear God. (*ISP* 104.3)

What a contrast between the course of Isaac and that pursued by the youth of our time, even among professed Christians! Young people too often feel that the bestowal of their affections is a matter in which self alone should be consulted,—a matter that neither God nor their parents should in any wise control. Long before they have reached manhood or womanhood, they think themselves competent to make their own choice, without the aid of their parents. A few years of married life are usually sufficient to show them their error, but often too late to prevent its baleful results. For the same lack of wisdom and self-control that dictated the hasty choice is permitted to aggravate the evil, until the marriage relation becomes a galling yoke. Many have thus wrecked their happiness in this life, and their hope of the life to come. (*CE* 228.2; 1894)

**True love** is a high and holy principle,  
altogether different in character from that  
love which is awakened by impulse and  
which suddenly dies when severely tested.  
(*PP 176.3*)

# Jacob and Esau

God knows the end from the beginning. He knew, before the birth of Jacob and Esau, just what characters they would both develop. He knew that Esau would not have a heart to obey him. He answered **the troubled prayer of Rebekah, and informed her** that she would have two children, and the elder should serve the younger. He presented the future history of her two sons before her, that they would be two nations, the one greater than the other, and the elder should serve the younger. The first-born was entitled to peculiar advantages and special privileges, which belonged to no other members of the family. (*ISP 105.2*)

- Isaac loved Esau better than Jacob, because Esau provided him venison. He was pleased with his bold, courageous spirit manifested in hunting wild beasts
- Jacob was the favorite son of his mother, because his disposition was mild, and better calculated to make his mother happy. Jacob was the favorite son of his mother, because his disposition was mild, and better calculated to make his mother happy.
- Jacob had learned from his mother what God had taught her, that the elder should serve the younger, and his youthful reasoning led him to conclude that this promise could not be fulfilled while Esau had the privileges which were conferred on the first-born.

- Esau took two idolatrous wives.
- Rebekah persuaded Jacob to deceive his father. Instead of trusting in God, the disposer of events, she manifested her lack of faith by persuading Jacob to deceive his father.



- Jacob's course in this was not approbated by God. Rebekah and Jacob should have waited for God to bring about his own purposes, in his own way, and in his own time, instead of trying to bring about the foretold events by the aid of deception.
- If Esau had received the blessing of his father, which was bestowed upon the first-born, his prosperity could have come from God alone; and he would have blessed him with prosperity, or brought upon him adversity, according to his course of action. If he should love and reverence God, like righteous Abel, he would be accepted and blessed of God. If like wicked Cain he had no respect for God, nor for his commandments, but followed his own corrupt course, he would not receive a blessing from God, but would be rejected of God, as was Cain. If Jacob's course should be righteous, if he should love and fear God, **he would be blessed of God, and the prospering hand of God would be with him**, even if he did not obtain the blessings and privileges generally bestowed upon the first-born. 1SP 107.1

The circumstances of Esau's selling his birthright **represent the unrighteous**, who consider the redemption purchased for them by Christ of little value, and sacrifice their heirship to Heaven for perishable treasures. Many are controlled by their appetite, and rather than to deny an unhealthy appetite, will sacrifice high and valuable considerations. If one must be yielded, the gratification of a depraved appetite, or the high and heavenly blessings which God promises only to the self-denying and God-fearing, the clamors of appetite, as in the case of Esau, will generally prevail, and for self-gratification, God and Heaven will be virtually despised. Even professed Christians will use **tea, coffee, snuff, tobacco and spirits**, all of which benumb the finer sensibilities of the soul. If you tell them they cannot have Heaven, and these hurtful indulgences, and that they should deny their appetites, and cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, they are offended, look sorrowful, and conclude that if the way is so strait that they cannot indulge in their gross appetites, they will not walk any longer in it. (*ISP* 108.1)

Especially will the corrupt passions control the mind of those who value Heaven of so little worth. Health will be sacrificed, the mental faculties enfeebled, and Heaven will be sold for these pleasures, as Esau sold his birthright. Esau was a reckless person. He made a solemn oath that Jacob should have his birthright. **This case is left on record as a warning to others.** As Esau learned that Jacob had obtained the blessing which would have belonged to him, had he not rashly sold it, he was greatly distressed. He repented of his rash act, when it was too late to remedy the matter. **Thus it will be with sinners in the day of God,** who have bartered away their heirship to Heaven for selfish gratifications and hurtful lusts. They will then find no place for repentance, although they may seek it, like Esau, carefully and with tears. (*ISP 108.2*)

**Jacob and Esau represent two classes;** Jacob the righteous, and Esau the wicked. Jacob's distress when he learned that Esau was marching against him with four hundred men, represents the trouble of the righteous as the decree goes forth to put them to death, just before the coming of the Lord. As the wicked gather about them they will be filled with anguish, for like Jacob they can see no escape for their lives. The angel placed himself before Jacob, and he took hold of the angel and held him, and wrestled with him all night. So also will the righteous, in their time of trouble and anguish, wrestle in prayer with God, as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Jacob in his distress prayed all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau. The righteous in their mental anguish will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the hand of the wicked who surround them. (*3SG 131.1*)