

The Science of Cultivating Faith

No. 9

When Abraham and Sarah had cleared themselves of all the scheme of unbelief which had produced Ishmael, and had stood upon faith alone,—dependence on the word of God alone,—Isaac, the true child of the promise, was born.

In harkening to the voice of Sarai (Gen. 16:1), Abram had swerved from the line of strict integrity to the word of God, from the strictness of true faith; and now that he had returned to the word only, to true faith, he must be tested before it could be certainly said of him that his faith was counted for righteousness.

He had trusted the naked word of God as against Ishmael, and had obtained Isaac, the true child of the promise of God. And now, having obtained Isaac, the question must be determined whether he would trust the naked word of God as against even Isaac himself.

Accordingly, God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine *only* son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham had received Isaac from God, by trusting the word of God only. Isaac alone was the seed promised by the word of the Lord. After Isaac was born, God had confirmed the word by declaring, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Gen. 21:12. And now came the word of God, Take thy son, thine only son Isaac, and offer him for a burnt-offering.

God had declared to Abraham, Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven for multitude; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" "In Isaac shall thy seed be called;" and *now*, Offer Isaac for a burnt-offering!

But, if Isaac is offered for a burnt-offering, if Isaac is burned up, what will become of the promise of the blessing of all nations in him? What will become of the promise, Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven innumerable? Yet there stood the word, Offer Isaac for a burnt-offering. Abraham had trusted the word of God only, as against Ishmael, but *this is more* than trusting the word of God as against *Isaac*—it is trusting the word of God as against *the word of God!*

And Abraham did it, hoping against hope. God had said: Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven; In Isaac shall thy seed be called; Offer Isaac for a burnt-offering. Abraham did not insist that God should "harmonize these passages." It was all-sufficient for *him* to know that the statements were all *the word of God*. Knowing this, he would trust that word, would follow that word, and would let the Lord "harmonize these passages," or "explain these texts," if any such thing were needed.

Said Abraham: God has said, Offer Isaac for a burnt-offering. That I will do. God has said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called;" and, Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven for multitude. I interfered once in the promise, and hindered it till I repudiated all that I had done, and came back to the word only. *Then*, by a miracle, God gave me Isaac, the promised seed. Now *he* says, Offer Isaac, the promised seed, for a burnt-offering. I will do it: by a miracle God gave him at the first; and by a miracle God can restore him. Yet when I shall have offered him for a burnt-offering, he will be dead; and the only miracle that can then restore him is a miracle that will bring him back from the dead. But God is able to do even that, *and He will do it*; for his word is spoken, Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven for multitude, and, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. And even the bringing back of Isaac from the dead will be to God no more than He has already done; for, as to offspring, both my body and Sarah's were as good as dead, and yet God brought forth Isaac from us. He can raise Isaac from the dead, and he will. Bless the Lord!

It was settled. He arose, and took his servants and Isaac, and went three days' journey "unto the place of which God had told him." And when on the third day he "saw the place afar off," "Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Gen. 22:5. Who will go?—"I and the lad will go." And who will come again?—"I and the lad will go, . . . *and come again* to you." Abraham expected to have Isaac *come back* with him as certainly as that he *went* with him.

Abraham expected to offer Isaac for a burnt-offering, and expected *then* to see Isaac rise from the ashes and go back with him. For the word of God had gone forth, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, and, Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven for multitude. And Abraham would trust that word only that it *could* never fail. Heb. 11:17-19.

THIS IS FAITH. And thus "the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." James 2:23. But yet above this, "It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed; if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:23-25.

To trust the word of God only; to depend upon the word of God only; and to depend upon the word of God, even as against the word of God—*this* is FAITH: this is the faith which brings the righteousness of God.

This is what it is to *exercise* faith. *This* is "what the Scripture means when urging upon us the necessity of exercising faith." And "understanding how to exercise faith," this is the science of the gospel. And the science of the gospel is the science of sciences.

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