

# Let's NOT Make a Deal

*Finding Life in God's Sacrifice to You  
Rather than in Your Sacrifice to God*

*Father,* We thank You today that the gates of Heaven have been flung wide open because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, and that it is by His blood that we have been given access freely, clearly to the very throne room of Your grace.

We thank You that in Jesus Christ we are robed in righteousness and therefore allowed the privilege of seeing Your face, and we thank You that our souls are satisfied simply by beholding Your likeness.

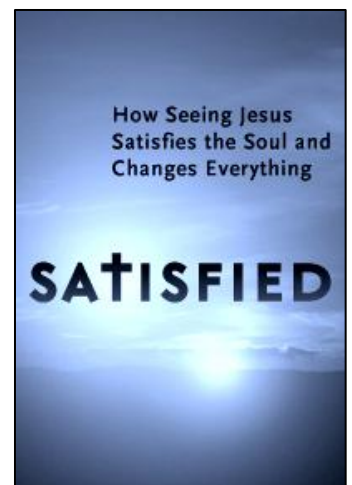
We thank You, Lord, this day for opening up the eyes of our hearts and allowing us to see wondrous things from Your Word. Transform us today as You awaken us to the glory of the Gospel. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

Do you remember the old game show, *Let's Make A Deal*? It was one of my favorites. It has re-emerged with a new host, but I don't know if it will ever be quite as good as it was with Monty Hall, walking through the audience of people all dressed up in their crazy costumes, looking for someone who would make a deal with him. It was so fun because you never knew if somebody was going to make good deal or not.

Monty would say, *I'm looking for somebody who has two safety pins*, and he would select a hopeful contestant, who would trade his pins, only to discover he had traded them for some Turtle Wax. But then, Monty would give the contestant the opportunity to trade the Turtle Wax for an unknown prize behind one of three doors. If it was a good trade, he might have won a car. If it was a bad trade, he might discover that he had won two goats.

At the end of the game, the contestant would choose either door number one, door number two, or door number three, but Monty would throw in a twist and say: *You can choose to change your selection to door number two or keep the one you have*.

The show became so popular that it even generated conversation among math geniuses about the statistical probabilities of finding a good deal based on the doors which had previously revealed them. It was always about making a good deal. That was the fun of the game.



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## LET'S MAKE A DEAL IDEOLOGY

People may tend to look at life with a *let's make a deal* perspective, and often, without realizing it, they try to relate to God by making a deal. It is usually a more subtle trade than saying to God, *I'll give You my Turtle Wax if You give me a car*, but it has the same basic underpinnings: *I'll go to church and do the things I'm supposed to do, and You will bless me and give me a good life.*

### Subtle Differences

The thing that's tricky about this is that what we do does matter. Sowing and reaping is one of the most important principles in the Scripture.<sup>1</sup> If you study and apply yourself, then you will do better in school and perhaps go on with an education that will lead you into a career that is good; if you apply the truths of godly living to your life, it does make a difference.

But there is a subtlety about the way this reasoning drifts into our thinking. When we think that if we make a sacrifice it will move God on our behalf, we have moved away from the essence of what the Gospel really is, and we have fallen into essentially a religious legalism. Almost every religion in the world operates on the concept of *let's make a deal*, but Christianity is not a religion in that sense. It is a story of what God has done for us, and an opportunity to be in relationship with the living God.

**SOME YEARS AGO** I was visiting a couple who had become alienated from the fellowship and were feeling bitter, but they were going through a very difficult time. She was very sick, financial problems had wreaked havoc in their home and he was embittered about it all. I was the midst of trying to find some ways to communicate and hopefully to lift some of the poison of the bitterness, and I remember the husband saying to me, *Tithing doesn't work. It hasn't made my wife well and it hasn't helped us financially*, and in essence he was saying, *I had a deal with God and God didn't live up to His part of the agreement.*

If you are thinking that if you make a deal with God, it will move God on your behalf, you will not only tend to be always looking for God to fulfill His part, but the focus of your life will be on what you are doing for God, rather than on what He has already done for you.

### Wrong Assumptions

The *let's make a deal with God* ideology has behind it two absolutely fundamental and egregiously wrong assumptions.

#### Something Valuable to Trade

First, it assumes you have a sacrifice which is valuable enough to move God. You don't. In fact, Paul said that we are all born in sin and have fallen short of the glory of God.<sup>2</sup> And Isaiah said that even if you were to bring to God your best righteousness – whatever is most valuable or whatever you could do the best – compared to the glory and holiness of God, it would be like filthy rags to Him.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 6:7

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 64:6

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT** to understand this, because this is at the heart of the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may not sound like good news, but ultimately, it is the best news to say to you that because you were born in sin, you do not, in and of yourself, have anything nearly of enough value to pay God or to move God in the least.

That being the absolute truth, the only hope we could ever have is that God Himself would provide the sacrifice, the substitute for our sin, some way in which He could be just and punish sin, yet at the same time show His mercy and His love and pour out blessing. And that is the Gospel. That is what He has done for us in Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

### **A Need to Deal**

Secondly, the *let's make a deal with God* mentality has behind it another massively wrong assumption because it assumes that God is not already totally for you. There is no need to make a deal with God if you know He is already one hundred percent for you.

The glory of the Gospel is that God has proven to us He is utterly one hundred percent predisposed to pour out blessing in our lives.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Bible says God is love<sup>6</sup> and love wants to give and pour out blessing, so much so that God gave His one and only Son for us.<sup>7</sup> And since God so loved us that He gave us His only begotten Son, since He gave us His all, why would you ever think that He is not going to give you everything you need?<sup>8</sup>

God's heart always has been, and forever will be, the heart of a loving Father Who only wants to pour out that which is good.<sup>9</sup> Every good and perfect gift comes from God.<sup>10</sup> God is already completely predisposed to bless you, and there is nothing you can give God, nothing you could pay God, that would make Him love you more.

**THERE IS SO MUCH AT STAKE** in understanding this basic good news, that I want to illustrate by contrasting two vivid stories filled with

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 3; 5:18-19; 1 John 4:10

<sup>5</sup> Malachi 3:10; Ephesians 1:3

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 4:8, 16

<sup>7</sup> John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9, 10

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 23:1; Matt 6:8, 25-33; John 1:16; Rom 8:32;

2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:19

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 30:18

<sup>10</sup> James 1:17

*God so loved us  
that He gave us  
His only begotten Son;  
He gave us His all.  
There is nothing  
you can give God,  
nothing you can pay God,  
that would make Him love you more.*

unspeakable pathos and drenched with emotion and suspense. I want to tell the stories of two men, and two altars for two children, with two very different outcomes.

## **ABRAHAM**

### **A Picture of an Heir**

The first story is about Abraham and his only son, Isaac, from Genesis chapter twenty-two.

### **Called and Blessed**

Abraham was seventy-five years old when God raised him up (called him), and it is a very important part of the story of Abraham that he was called. Abraham did not raise himself up and people did not raise him up. God called him, and promised him that he would be the father of a nation, that he would be a blessing to others because he himself would be so blessed, that he would be a father of a people, and that he would have a land.<sup>11</sup> God spoke this blessing, and over and over throughout the narrative of Abraham we see the reassurance of the promise as God demonstrated in a thousand different ways that Abraham was loved, accepted, and blessed, and that God's word would be true to him. He was an heir.

If I could sum up the heart of what the Holy Spirit wants to speak to you today from His Word, it is that He would be to you a deposit guaranteeing your inheritance in the saints,<sup>12</sup> to leave you with the assurance that you are not an orphan, but that you're an heir.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Genesis 12:1-3

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14

<sup>13</sup> Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29, 4:7; Titus 3:7

*The heart of what the Holy Spirit wants to speak to you today from His Word, is that He would be to you a deposit guaranteeing your inheritance in the saints to leave you with the assurance that you are not an orphan, but that you're an heir.*

## **A Puzzling Test**

### **A Forbidden and Detestable Practice**

The story of Abraham becomes quite puzzling when we read in Genesis twenty-two that God tested him:

<sup>1</sup> *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'* <sup>2</sup> *He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'*

It's an absolute puzzle, because in the first place, we will see later in the Mosaic law that child sacrifice is an absolute abomination to God, expressly forbidden, and a detestable practice as seen amongst the Canaanite pagans.

### **The Child of Promise**

It is also a puzzle because how could it possibly be that God could be telling Abraham to sacrifice this child of promise? He was the only son of Abraham and Sarah; he was the one through whom the promise would flow. If he were to be killed, then the promise would be killed.

How could God be doing this?

## **Faith in God's Provision**

And so the story goes that Abraham rose up early in the morning. He cut the wood for the sacrifice and he went up the mountain with his son.

<sup>6</sup> *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.* <sup>7</sup> *And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.'* He said, *'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'*

That is the question that's at the heart of the story, and that is the question that's at the heart of life: *Where is the lamb? Where's the provision?*

<sup>8</sup> *Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.'*

Abraham was saying, *I don't understand how this is going to happen, but this much I know, the son of promise will not die. God's word will not fall empty to the ground. The only way I could envision this coming to pass is that God is going to provide the sacrifice.*

It was all pointing to a day in which, on the mount of Calvary, God Himself became the Lamb.

<sup>9</sup> *When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.* <sup>10</sup> *Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.* <sup>11</sup> *But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'* <sup>12</sup> *He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.'*

<sup>13</sup> *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.* <sup>14</sup> *So Abraham called the name of that place, 'The LORD will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'*

## **GOD Provides THE Sacrifice**

The question of life is, *Where is the lamb? Where is the provision?* It is not, *What do I need to do for God in order to get out of this predicament?* It is, *What has God already done for me in Jesus Christ that is going to sustain me through this?* The invitation is to not look to yourself for an answer to whatever predicament you're in, but to look to God for His provision in Jesus Christ.

## GOD Makes a Vow

<sup>15</sup> And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup> and said, 'By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

God made the vow. God provided the sacrifice. God assured the blessing.

## The Right Questions

Preachers tend to look at that story and say: *Be more like Abraham. Look what he was willing to sacrifice for God. Are you willing to sacrifice for God? What about if God asked you for something that's most precious? Are you willing to give up your all, are you willing to make the big sacrifices? Are you willing to give more money? Are you willing to give ...blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, manipulative blah!*

This story is not about how you need to be more like Abraham. Telling me that I ought to be willing to sacrifice more for God does not empower me to sacrifice more for God. And telling somebody they ought to be a better person doesn't empower them to become a better person.

This story is not about what Abraham did for God. This story is about what God did for Abraham, and possibly even more about what God did for Isaac.

Isaac I can relate to. Isaac, the boy who might be confused by the predicament, and yet knows that there is a lot of promise in him; the one who, born in sin, might rightfully deserve God's displeasure, but instead, for whom God sent His only Son to be the provision, to die on the altar that should have been mine. God provided more than a ram in the thicket. God provided Jesus. That I can understand.

So the question in this story is not, therefore, *What was Abraham's sacrifice to God?* The question is, *What was God's sacrifice to Abraham?* The question is not, *What was Abraham's vow to God?* The question is, *What was God's vow to Abraham?*

The picture here is of a man who was the heir of the promises of God, of a man who is called the father of many nations,<sup>14</sup> the father of all who

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<sup>14</sup> Genesis 17:4, 5

*The invitation  
is to not look to yourself  
for an answer  
to whatever predicament you're in,  
but to look to God  
for His provision  
in Jesus Christ.*

believe,<sup>15</sup> and a friend of God.<sup>16</sup> The picture is of what happens when a deep assurance of a promise from God lodges in a man's soul, and how much, then, we too can live a life of obedience out of that assurance.

## JEPHTHAH

### A Portrait of an Orphan

If you were reading straight through the Bible in the Hebrew, reading through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, then Numbers, Deuteronomy and the stories of Joshua, when you begin to read the story of Jephthah in Judges chapter eleven, the language similarities alone would make you associate this story with the story of Abraham and Isaac. There is no mistaking that these two stories remind us of each other, and yet how different they are, for the story of Jephthah is one of the most tragic, horrific stories in the Scripture.

### Jephthah Makes a Vow

<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites. <sup>30</sup> And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, 'If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, <sup>31</sup> then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.' <sup>32</sup> So Jephthah crossed

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<sup>15</sup> Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23

*We have a nation now  
of orphan hearts,  
people who never knew the regular,  
ongoing love and counsel of a father  
in their home,  
who don't have a sense of certainty  
about belonging.  
We can hear the heart cry of a nation,  
of a people that are saying,  
'I want to belong, I don't feel accepted,  
I want to be acceptable.'*

*over to the Ammonites to fight against them, and the LORD gave them into his hand.*

This is a picture of a desperate man who makes a desperate vow. *God, if you will give me victory today over the Ammonites, then when I return home in peace, whatever comes out of my house first, whatever animal, whatever person, whatever servant, whatever lamb, whatever comes out, I will sacrifice as a whole burnt offering to You, if You will do this for me.* He was making a deal with God, *If You will do this, then I'll do this*, and it was the ultimate, tragic, perverted deal with God. He thought he could make a deal with God, that his vow and his sacrifice were going to move God. He was desperate. Why would a man make such a desperate vow?

## **An Orphan Heart**

That answer is clear in the beginning of the story. Judges, chapter eleven:

<sup>1</sup> *Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior,*

He was very gifted, a mighty warrior, powerful in the flesh, a charismatic personality, and, as we'll see later, a skilled negotiator. *but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was the father of Jephthah...*

Jephthah was the son of a prostitute. Was this because his father was promiscuous, or because his father had adopted the practices of the Canaanites and had gone to a cultic temple of prostitution? We don't know; we're not told. Perhaps the latter. But

this we do know: If Abraham is the perfect picture of an heir, then Jephthah is the portrait of an orphan.

Here is what happened.

<sup>2</sup> *And Gilead's wife also bore him sons. And when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, 'You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.'* <sup>3</sup> *Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob, and worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him.*

Jephthah was rejected and had no people. He had no place of belonging. He was unaccepted and unacceptable. He was talented. He was smart. He was a warrior. And he was an orphan.

Some years ago, I was reading an article about gangs, and I was particularly taken by some of the comments which were shared by members of a Latino gang about what it was like to be living in a different culture. Many were immigrants, first or second generation Americans, and they ranged from children as young as twelve years old to adults.

*'It's different for us,' says a member of MS13 whose back, arm and wrist tattoos advertise his crew. 'It's like this is a new country. Because that's how they look at you. They look at you like this isn't your country.'*

Another, a 24-year old, said, *'I been here for twelve years, but ...'* he then said in essence, *'I'm not accepted.'*

Another said, *'So you got your set. You got your signs. You got your colors. You belong. That's like saying, 'This is where I belong.'*

Another adult said, *'There's a serious issue of racial discrimination when it comes to Latino kids.'*

And another said, *'White people look down on black people, but even black people are, like, looking down on us, calling us names.'*<sup>17</sup>

And on and on they talked, but everything they said came back to this: They just wanted to belong.

We have a nation now that is raising a culture of orphan hearts. If we were to ask for a show of hands here, or if we were to conduct a poll of the nation, and ask how many really knew the regular, ongoing love and counsel of a father in their home, we would

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<sup>17</sup> Joe Killian, *Why do kids join gangs?* (Greensboro: News & Record, August 26, 2007. Updated Saturday, July 19, 2008). Accessed 2-14-2012 at [http://www.news-record.com/content/2007/08/26/article/why\\_do\\_kids\\_join\\_gangs](http://www.news-record.com/content/2007/08/26/article/why_do_kids_join_gangs).

see that it's no more than fifty percent at best, without even accounting for all of the other factors that have distracted and have pulled away the affection of the home. People don't have a sense of certainty about belonging, and we can hear the heart cry of a nation, of a people that are saying, *I want to belong, I don't feel accepted, I want to be acceptable.*

When that root of shame comes into the heart, it can lead down a path of rebellion: *If I'm not accepted, and I'm not acceptable, then I'll just do unacceptable things; I might as well.* Or it can lead down a path of religiosity, to essentially say, *I will make myself acceptable, I'll do whatever it takes to be accepted.* And that's what Jephthah did. He was smart, he was a brilliant negotiator, he was a skilled warrior, but he didn't belong. So he said, *I want to do anything it takes to belong.*

Did you notice what passion there was in his heart when he made his vow? I'll tell you why. It was because the elders of Gilead asked him for help and he saw the opportunity to belong.

<sup>4</sup> *After a time the Ammonites made war against Israel.* <sup>5</sup> *And when the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob.* <sup>6</sup> *And they said to Jephthah, 'Come and be our leader, that we may fight against the Ammonites.'* <sup>7</sup> *But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, 'Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?'*

He was saying, *You're the ones that brought more hurt into my life than anybody else. You hated me. You rejected me. And now you are coming to me?*

They went to him because he was known to be a warrior. The more orphaned our hearts are, the more we will be drawn to put orphans in leadership, and we will value someone's giftedness rather than their character.

<sup>8</sup> *And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'That is why we have turned to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the Ammonites and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.'*

And Jephthah asked for what he had been longing for:

<sup>9</sup> *Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, 'If you bring me home again to fight against the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them over to me, I will be your head.'*

*The purity and the simplicity  
of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ  
announces that you have nothing  
with which to pay God,  
and you have no need to.  
He has already paid it for you!*

He didn't ask for riches of gold. He didn't even ask for a palace. He was saying, *I'll do this if you'll just let me come home.*

<sup>10</sup> *And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'The LORD will be witness between us, if we do not do as you say.'*

In the next scene Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, and it is important to note that scholars agree that the narrative followed the pattern of skilled negotiation in ancient wartimes. Jephthah had a gift with words and he was a skilled warrior. But because he was an orphan, Jephthah had a desperate heart that made him into a very religious man.

At one point in the text it says that Jephthah spoke all these words in front of the Lord. This is the incredible irony of the story. Jephthah was saying, *I'll be willing to sacrifice ANYTHING for You, God.* It sounds very religious, noble and sacrificial, but it is the exact opposite of the Gospel, for Jephthah was not making his vow out of an inward assurance and confidence in the Lord. He was making his vow because he was absolutely unsure of whether God was with him.

There is a trick from Hell to make us think that as we express our religious, sacrificial, do-good lives through a thousand different vows and sacrifices that we make for God, that therefore God will bless us. This way of thinking casts a veil over the eyes of our understanding of the purity and the simplicity of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, which announces that you have nothing with which to pay God, and you have no need to. He has already paid it for you!

Religion wants to call out to us and say, *If you will be better, if you would just be better, then God will finally start blessing you,* and it casts a veil over the eyes of our understanding because the Gospel announces exactly the opposite: God is utterly for

*Religion wants to call out to us and say,  
'If you will be better,  
if you would just be better,  
then God will finally start blessing you'.*

*The Gospel announces,  
God is utterly for you  
and He has blessed you  
with every spiritual blessing in Christ.  
He gave His only begotten Son.  
What more could He give to you?*

you and He has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in Christ.<sup>18</sup> You cannot add one thing to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has already given to you all things in Christ. He gave His only begotten Son.<sup>19</sup> What more could He give to you? Has God not proven that if He is for us, who could be against us?<sup>20</sup>

The Bible tells us that the Spirit had already come upon Jephthah before he made the vow. *Why, why, Paul said to the Galatians, who has bewitched you, why having started in the Spirit have you now returned to the law? Do you think you were saved by your own effort? No! You were regenerated by the Spirit of God. Why do you think you will be sanctified by your own effort?*<sup>21</sup> The Spirit brings life, he said to the Corinthians, the letter kills.<sup>22</sup>

There is so much at stake. We must expose the religious spirit, a conspiracy from Hell to rob us of the purity and the simplicity of the Gospel, which is freedom, healing, deliverance and LIFE!<sup>23</sup>

And, Paul was right, the letter of the law can, literally, kill, as we read on in Jephthah's story:

### Tragedy in the Vow

<sup>34</sup> *Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. She was his only child – that is the exact language used of Isaac, his one*

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<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 1:3

<sup>19</sup> John 3:16

<sup>20</sup> Romans 8:31

<sup>21</sup> Galatians 3:1-6

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:6

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 49:9, 53:4, 61:1; John 10:10

*and only – besides her he had neither son nor daughter.*

His precious girl came out of the house with timbrel in hand and dancing like Miriam at the Red Sea,<sup>24</sup> rejoicing over her father and the victory of God, not knowing she was dancing her way to her death.

The story continues by saying that she asked permission to go up the mountains for two months to mourn the fact that she would never be a mother and that her whole family line would die because of Jephthah's vow.

Whereas Isaac had gone up on the mountain with his father to worship, Jephthah's daughter went up on the mountain to mourn without her father.

Those penning the Scripture under the unction of the Holy Spirit were not released to even utter the words that a father in Israel had killed his only daughter.

<sup>39</sup> *And at the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to his vow that he had made.*

Because a man had said, *I'll do anything to be accepted.*

## A STARK CONTRAST

Could the contrast between Abraham and Jephthah be more stark?

Both Abraham and Jephthah had seeds of a noble character.

Both men had one child.

Both children went up the mountain, Isaac to worship with Abraham; Jephthah's daughter to mourn without her father.

**Abraham** was told to sacrifice his child, but was inwardly assured that he would never do it. **Jephthah** was never told to sacrifice his child, but was willing to sacrifice anything for success because he had no inward assurance.

**Abraham** was full of faith because he knew that he belonged to God. **Jephthah** was full of fear because he had no sense of belonging.

**Jephthah** made a vow that God didn't want him to make; **Abraham** made no vow, but God did.

**Abraham's** eyes were on the sacrifice that God would provide; **Jephthah's** eyes were on the sacrifice he would make.

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<sup>24</sup> Exodus 15:20-21

*Abraham was full of faith  
because he knew that he belonged to God.  
Faith comes by hearing  
and hearing by the Word of God.  
The Word of God is Good News!*

**Abraham**, who rested in the sacrifice of God and the vow of God to him, received life; **Jephthah**, who lived by his own vow and his sacrifice, found only death.

The spirit of the Lord was on **Jephthah**; the blessing of the Lord was also on **Abraham**.

**Jephthah's** tragedy wasn't in the absence of the blessing of God, but in the mixing of his self-made vows, in putting himself under the law. The man who had no assurance that he belonged, became an abomination to Israel. I myself have sacrificed things in my life, quietly, inwardly, from that root of shame, but I have said to that religious spirit, NO MORE.

**Abraham** was full of faith because he knew that he belonged to God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.<sup>25</sup> The Word of God is Good News! But **Jephthah** was full of fear. He made his vow because he was afraid. He was afraid he would be rejected again. **Abraham's** eyes were on the sacrifice that God would provide, but **Jephthah's** eyes were on the sacrifice that he would provide. **Abraham**, who rested in the sacrifice of God and the vow of God to him, received life, but **Jephthah**, who lived by his vow and his sacrifice, found death.

The Spirit of the Lord was on **Jephthah**. The Spirit of the Lord was on **Abraham**. It wasn't the absence of the blessing of God that brought the tragedy. It was the mixing of self-made vows with the pre-established favor of God that brought death. This is what I think Paul meant when he said that the letter kills. As in Jephthah's life, it kills joy, it kills freedom, it kills relationship, and it can kill the ones you never want to hurt.

## THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The pure and simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ effects huge shifts in our hearts.

**1** The Gospel moves the orphan heart away from seeking approval by making a sacrifice for God, to the heart of an heir that has found **approval through the sacrifice God has made**. God Himself has provided the Lamb, and you, therefore, as a child of God, are fully accepting what He has done for you, pure and simple: You were made to be a child of God, and if a child, then an heir forever.<sup>26</sup>

**2** The Gospel moves the orphan heart away from living by the assumed power of our vow to God, to **living the abundant life by the assurance of God's vows** to us. There are many good instructions in this Book, but it is not an instruction Book. It is a story of redemption, and an announcement of the glorious liberty that you can have in Christ. My hunger for this Word does not come from a law that gets me up in the morning and says, *Let me read today's instructions and rules, and let me try harder*. The joy of the Word of God is to read this story, to discover a fresh word about what God has done for you in Jesus Christ, and to recover and claim His promises for you, which the Bible says are all *Yes!* and *Amen!* in Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> They are all yours.

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<sup>25</sup> Romans 10:17

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<sup>26</sup> Galatians 4:4-7

<sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20

*Our prayer life is in the name of Jesus, which means that whatever our request, all of our claim and all of our hope is because of what our Father God has already accomplished for us in Jesus Christ.*

**3** The Gospel moves the orphan heart away from language and mentality that says, *If I will, God will*, to the heart of an heir that says, **Because my Father has, I can**. It will change everything.

It will change your prayer life. Our prayer life is *in the name of Jesus*, which means that whatever our request, all of our claim and all of our hope is because of what our Father God has already accomplished for us in Jesus Christ.

By His stripes I can be healed.<sup>28</sup> By His sacrifice, I can be forgiven.<sup>29</sup> By His perfect righteousness, I am robed with His righteousness.<sup>30</sup> It is only when you see this that you can say with Paul, *Because He has, I can do all things through Christ Who gives me strength*.<sup>31</sup> It is only when you say, *Because God has finished the work in Jesus*, that you can say, *I therefore have Sabbath in Christ*.<sup>32</sup> It is because God has reconciled us unto Him through the shed blood of Jesus<sup>33</sup> that I can have peace that passes all understanding.<sup>34</sup>

Jephthah just wanted peace. *When I return home in peace*, he said, *I'll sacrifice*. Remember when Jesus looked over Jerusalem and wept, saying, *Oh that you would know what makes for peace, but you did not*.<sup>35</sup>

Your vows and your sacrifices do not make peace for you. What makes for peace is the finished reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup>

**4** The Gospel moves the orphan heart away from saying, *God probably won't bless me because I'm not good enough*, to saying, **God has blessed me with every spiritual blessing in Christ**.<sup>37</sup>

**5** The Gospel moves the orphaned heart away from fear, *What sacrifice will the Lord require of me next*, to **faith**, *The Lord has sacrificed for me in Christ, and if God is for me, who could be against me?*<sup>38</sup>

God has always intended and yearned to pour out blessing upon His precious, beloved people, and there did need to be a sacrifice to pay for the sin of the people. But the glory of the Gospel is that God Himself provided the Lamb. Therefore, **no vow is needed; no sacrifice is required**.

## THE BEST DEAL EVER

We don't have to wonder about making a good deal or a bad deal. There is only one good deal, and it's the best deal that's ever been made. God says:

*I'll provide the Lamb. If you accept Him in faith, I'll give you everything behind door number one, door number two, AND door number three.*

### And THAT's the Gospel!

Amen.

*Father, we are so thankful that You have done it all for us in Jesus, and we come today in a mighty posture of spiritual warfare against anything that would take away, diminish, pervert, or distort the power and purity of this Gospel. We ask this day that this Gospel would deliver us and set us free; that today there would be healing and restoration, encouragement and faith born and quickened in our hearts.*

*Thank You, Lord, for all that You are doing, because of all that You have done.*

*IN JESUS' NAME, Amen.*

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 8:14-17; 1 Peter 2:24

<sup>29</sup> Hebrews 10:1-14

<sup>30</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>31</sup> Philippians 4:13

<sup>32</sup> Hebrews 4:9-10

<sup>33</sup> Colossians 1:19-20

<sup>34</sup> Philippians 4:7

<sup>35</sup> Luke 19:41-42

<sup>36</sup> Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:19-20

<sup>37</sup> Ephesians 1:3

<sup>38</sup> Romans 8:31

## *Closing Remarks*

For some this may be the day in which you realize that either through religion or rebellion you have been trying to belong, to know that you are accepted, and you are realizing you can't make yourself acceptable, that it is something only God could do. Today is your glad day to say yes and accept the saving, healing, cleansing work of God in Jesus Christ. Praise God! He loves you so much.

For some, this may be a day of healing and transformation for your life, displacing old orphan thinking with the riches of God's mercy. Praise God!

And for some, this may be the day of letting go of old, stale, religious-sounding vows that are empty of power, void of truth, and dangerous to the soul. You are saying, NO MORE. Praise God!

May all of our hearts be turned with full attention upon Jesus, Who is the author and the finisher of our faith. The fullness of what God has done for us in Jesus not only has paid for our sins, but has opened up the riches of all of His mercy to us in Jesus Christ.

**SO WHEN YOU ARE GETTING READY** to try to made a deal with God, let's just say,

*NAH. Let's NOT make a deal. I already have too good a deal in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ!*

*May the Lord God bless you and keep you,  
And be kind and gracious to you,  
And make His face to shine upon you,  
And give you His peace  
Today and every day, forevermore.  
Amen*



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