

MEETING TEMPTATIONS RIGHT (BRINGS SPIRITUAL GROWTH-II)

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Recent messages revealed from Scripture that victory received (in and through) temptation in the life of a Christian, is directly involved with that person's pursuit of eternal Life. Also, the devil knows that, and he is constantly trying to rob people of an atonement right to be delivered from temptations and trials (which are from him in the first place). Satan works through the carnal nature of 'self' in the human heart (which is where wrong desires and temptations come from). (James 1:14 says plainly "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

Temptations successfully met in obedience to God's Word, is however, the way our faith grows and develops, and they are used by God as 'stepping stones' toward receiving everything we need in this life, with Scriptural desires being fulfilled (and our preparation by God for Eternal Life). That is because God uses trials and temptations met in His way, to perfect our Christian character in everything that concerns our spiritual life of trust on Him for peace in our home, to perfect our faith to trust Him for finances, and perfect health of body for ourselves and family. More importantly, it is to prepare us to meet Jesus and to receive eternal Life. The value of temptations met right in the real Truth of God, becomes the richest of all blessings to believers in this life (and the 'eternal results' are really too wonderful to comprehend).

God's Word teaches us to have faith in the 'resurrected' Christ and the power of His atonement Blood (to meet temptations according to Scripture). For us to confess our sins to God, repent of them, and believe on the power of Jesus' shed Blood, is God's divine plan for His pathway to victory over temptations from the devil (and is all part of our preparation for eternal Life). God does not expect or allow us to depend on our own strength to meet trials, nor to go by sight, feeling, and being subject to fears (which Satan will always use to try to destroy our faith, cause us to turn our back on God's power, and turn to some human source of help). We should not and cannot doubt the power of the Blood of the resurrected 'Son of God' (which confirms every promise of God given us in Scripture). Rather, we must believe that the power of Jesus' Atonement Blood is all sufficient for us, by a sincere faith on that power of His Blood to bring victory through every temptation from Satan. (We should recall that apostle Paul said Jesus made a promise to him) (2Cor. 12:9) "And, He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Abraham believed God's promises, and that God's Word was all sufficient even before the Old Testament Law was written, and a couple thousand years before Jesus' death on the Cross (to further authorize

God's Word and promise). Thus, Abraham is the clearest and brightest of all examples for those who have faith in God's Word, and he is the forefather of all others who act in true faith. (Rom. 4:18), "Under utterly hopeless circumstances he hopefully believed, so that he might become the forefather of many nations, in agreement with the words, "Equally numerous shall your posterity be."

The example of Mordecai's faithful obedience to God (when he refused to compromise with God's Word after he had been ordered to give reverence to the wicked Prime Minister, Haman), ...is another very clear example of the great results for one who will not disobey God's Word even if it cost their life.

It can take a hard test to rid us of self-reliance that we have been trusting on, and to get the last bit of it exposed and entirely gotten rid of, but it 'must' be removed from our heart. God will remove self from our heart if we make a choice to turn to Him in times of temptation (regardless of circumstances).

Even though Abraham had been declared righteous (and had already received the 'promise' from God, he was still severely tested by God (to prove that he feared God and would faithfully obey Him in every circumstance). (Gen. 22:1-3 says) "Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ... "Abraham!"

... "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about."

God's command for Abraham to sacrifice his son would be a most severe test for any-one to face, and it was the most trying test for Abraham, but it was to prove if his love for God was truly sincere and uncompromising. We can be sure Satan was there to try to talk Abraham out of obeying God's instruction to sacrifice his son. But Abraham had started right in his life of faith, with a sincere surrender of the self-life, and he was committed to obeying God's Word. So early the next morning he had set out to do as God had told him.

It is very important that we also read and study the Word of God, to learn just what it means to truly surrender the self-life, and just how to meet every circumstance in life. How important it is to know that we can have our heart cleansed from all sin and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

After we have made that surrender to do God's will in our life (and we are cleansed and filled with the Spirit of God), our obedience to His Word will not be difficult at all. It will just follow our desire to do God's will, and we will learn how valuable it is to meet temptations in God's way (and to reap the rich spiritual rewards and preparation for Eternal Life). There must be (and will be) a continual heart purity and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our life. Aside from taking that submissive and obedient position there is no true obedience. Paul said (1 Cor. 13:3), "And if I distribute all my

possessions to the poor, and give up my body to be burned, but am destitute of Love, it profits me nothing."

Obedient Divine Love is what Paul was talking about, the 'love of God' which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts because we stand acquitted as result of our faith, and we are inspired with hope (Rom. 5:5) "and that this hope never disappoints, because God's love for us floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

In Abraham's case, he met the final test of the sincerity of his love for God with uncompromising faithful obedience. The reason for God to allow the temptation or trial to come, is because of obedience to the Word of God. God's only purpose is to perfect our obedience to His Word (not in our own strength, but in the strength of God), so we can enter into much greater blessings than we had known before (when our obedient love for Him is perfected). The Bible never separates faith and obedience, nor can we separate it on our Christian pathway.

In his letters, the apostle Paul teaches us how divine love in our heart will be a light to others, (Phil. 2:12-15), "There-fore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." That is how real obedience should be portrayed in us, and it causes us to be lights in this dark world of sin. Jesus told us to be a light for others (Matt.5:16) "Just so let your light shine before all men, in order that they may see your holy lives and may give glory to your Father who is in Heaven."

That is how it was in the life of Abraham (our forefather in the faith); he was obedient with every step; and he was a true Gospel man. (So, he became a light for many Christians to follow!!) He had the 'promise' given to him about four thousand years ago, and the Law would not annul that. Abraham is portrayed as a man of Gospel faith and righteousness in Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians, and he received fullness of blessing as he progressed in the Christian life. God opened the windows of Heaven's fullest blessings toward Abraham (Gen. 24:1), "Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." God has those same blessings for everyone else who will follow that path of 'faithful obedience' to His Word.

Abraham received God's blessings because he had consecrated his life to God (from whom he learned obedience). Aside from the life of Jesus Christ, there is no more wonderful example of truth, faith, and righteousness, than Abraham's. He went step by step according to God's will to rid him of 'self' in his heart.

The first surrender of self and consecration that God asked him to make is written (Gen.12:1-3), "Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family, And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

He believed he would be blessed for obeying God's Word, and that is why he was able to act in faith. (Vs.4) "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him."

The next valuable temptation Abraham had to meet (which again proved to be great blessing to him because he met it in God's way) was a quarrel between his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. Abraham was humble peacemaker, knowing in his heart that God would make up for whatever he gave up to keep peace. (Gen.13:8-9) "So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we [are] brethren. "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

Lot chose the well-watered plain of Jordan valley and he parted from Abram, journeying to the east and settling near the city of Sodom (which God would later destroy because of the wickedness of a people of Sodom), while Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan. (Gen.13:14-17) "And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are-northward, southward, eastward, and west-ward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

Abraham later had a financial test to meet with the king of Sodom, and he also met that in God's way (which showed that every step of the way, he was obedient to God and His Word). Again, he believed God's Word that he would be blessed for obeying Him, and that is why he was able to act in faith as he did. The Bible never separates faith from obedience to God's Word.

After Lot was taken captive by the kings who attacked Sodom where Lot and his family dwelt, Abram recaptured him and all the people and goods which had been taken from Sodom. Upon his successful return, The king of Sodom said to Abram, (Gen. 14:21-23), "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath, that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.'"

After Abram had met that financial test according to God's Word, God appeared to him in a vision, to assure Abram of His great reward for not allowing himself to compromise in his faith on God to provide for his needs. Abram could have accepted the king of Sodom's generous offer, but he would then have had laid-up treasure to depend on instead of dependance on God through daily trust on Him to provide Abram's needs. (Gen.15:1-6) "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house

is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house (a servant) is my heir!"..And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him "So shall your descendants be." He believed in the Lord, Who accounted it to him for righteousness."

As a result, Abram's spiritual enlightenment became greater with each test of his faith met according to the Word of God. His knowledge of God grew greater until the great and final test of his faith came, to prove his sincere obedience and love for God. When God told Abraham to raise a knife over his only son to slay him as a sacrifice, that was his final test (but it certainly was the worst thing (most difficult thing) that any parent could be asked to do). The easiest way would have been to refuse to do it.

However, Abraham settled that matter to obey God and to do as the Lord commanded him, which soon brought fullness of blessings from God. (Gen.22:3) "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about."

Notice Abraham's perfect obedience to God, but it turned out to be 'spiritual graduation day' for him. That kind of obedience has been lost sight of in the Christian world, and we cannot imagine how valuable it is for us. Our only hope of Heaven is to go through our trials learning the lessons of obedience to God's Word and getting clear knowledge of God (so we turn to Him and to His Word in every circumstance in our life). Jesus' prayer (John 17:3 he said), "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, 'and' Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Through meeting valuable trials and temptations right, Abraham had come to know the 'only true God'.

(Getting back to Abraham's final test), (Gen. 22:6-8), "Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together."

It was because Abraham's love for God was genuine, that he believed and would obey God's command (even unto taking his son's life), having faith that God would somehow save his son Isaac from death. He told Isaac (in faith alone) that God would provide in some way for him to make the sacrifice that God had told him to make. (Vs. 9-14), "When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from Heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" . "Here I am"

he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son." . "Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So, Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.

We must all learn the same lesson, that is, nothing on earth, no consideration, risk, loss, heartache, money, reputation, nor relative, would ever make us disobey God's Word. Our surrender must be final to obey God without compromise along every line, and not put our name on anything that is not according to God's Word, (no policy, no contract, nor agreement) that would misplace our trust and become an idol between us and God. God wants our obedience to be perfect (because Scripture says that He is a jealous God), but He does not call us to do it in our own strength, but only in His strength that He gives to us.

All those trials gone through proved to be good for the growth and development of Abraham's faith; and it confirms that temptation met in God's way leads to fullness of blessing in this life and Eternal Life hereafter.

Abraham learned those lessons before the Bible was written for him to follow, and before the Holy Spirit was sent to this earth to be our Guide. If Abraham could learn those lessons of obedience in his age, surely, we can learn them in this 'age of the Holy Spirit'. Aside from that Jesus' Blood has purchased that same fullness of blessing for us in every thing, happiness spiritually, physically, financially, peace in our homes and in Christian work. Everything is to be ideal in Christ Jesus, just as we would like it to be, and by faith and obedience to God's Word we can have it that way. That is the value of temptations met according to God's plan, and the gateway to fullness of blessing in this life and Eternity as well.

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