

Fresh Oil Releases

Moving From Milk to Meat (part 2)

In part one of this series, we saw how God stepped in to deal with mixture under Abraham's roof. Ultimately his target was mixture and compromise in Abraham's heart. It is obvious that just pruning the branches of mixture would not bring a lasting result. One has to deal with the root of an issue; the foundation or soil in which a seed of compromise was allowed to germinate. Our father, Abraham, and his relationship with God serve as an example for any one of us who truly desires to walk out the steps of God's plan for our lives.

Surprisingly, our biggest enemy to the progress of this journey is not the devil, but the kingdom of Self. The enemy without can only gain access if the enemy within gives him standing room! So let us look at Abraham and find out just how the enemy within contributed to the mixture and compromise that God had to step in and ruthlessly deal with, in order to clear a pathway for the son of promise to grow to maturity.

Remember in Genesis 15, God cut covenant with Abram and by Genesis 17 had confirmed the covenant and furthermore, clarified and explained how the son of promise would come forth.. In Genesis 18 Abraham speaks to the Lord face to face and eats with Him. All in all, Abraham has had a number of powerful encounters with the God he serves. One would think that this would be enough to give Abraham an undivided heart and bring him to full surrender. Yet, after the destruction of Sodom, we find a disturbing statement!

Gen 20:1 NOW ABRAHAM journeyed from there toward the South country (the Negeb) and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar.

'Kadesh' means 'holy' and the root word for 'Shur' means 'to wander about as a harlot'. So Abraham has pitched his tent in between two locations spiritually. He is neither fully at a place of holiness to the Lord; nor is he being totally unfaithful. The actual city where he chose to live belonged to the Philistines and its name, Gerar, means 'to chew the cud'; in other words, 'to bring up a meal already eaten and chew it again!' Instead of forgetting what lay behind and pressing forward to take hold of that for which God had appointed him, Abraham is chewing on the whole topic. He is leaning on his own understanding and quite happy to live in an area belonging to the enemy even though he is in covenant with the one True God. No doubt he justified his choices by telling himself it was just a temporary stop; that once he had sorted it all out in his own mind, he would move on to embrace the prophetic word of God over his life. What he did not realise is that he had become a fence sitter - living in a place where he was able to justify his compromise in his own mind. This is demonstrated graphically in the events that follow.

Abimilech, the Philistine king, took a liking to Sarah and took her into his harem. This action on behalf of the enemy acted as a catalyst to bring to the surface the compromise hidden in Abraham's heart. He did not think of the consequences to his wife, nor of protecting the declared plan of God to bring forth a son from Sarah's virgin womb. He thought only of his own safety; the protection of his own flesh and so spoke a half-truth, calling Sarah his sister. She was actually his half-sister but more importantly she was his covenant wife! Abraham may have been in covenant with both Sarah and the Lord God, but he was not willing to fulfil his covenant

responsibilities and protect his covenant partners and their interests. Self was still firmly on the throne of his heart even though his mouth had spoken the words of covenant.

Fortunately, God spoke to Abimelech in a dream and revealed the truth to him and Sarah came out unscathed. I am sure Abraham breathed a sigh of relief and thought no more of it as he packed up his tent and moved to another location, loaded with lavish gifts from a repentant enemy king! That's the thing about compromise in our hearts - we often look at the outward manifestations and justify our actions in the light of the results. If you leave a place richer than you came to it, surely God's smile is still upon your life! Until God decides it is high time we grow up and steps in to circumcise our hearts, we delude ourselves that our lack of the fear of God and compromised hearts are no big deal. However, God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that he will reap and if we sow to the flesh and mollycoddle and feed the king of Self, we will in due season reap corruption. What blinds us to this fact is that the reaping season is often quite a way down the road from the sowing season - testimony to a very patient God who wants us all to come to repentance on our own.

In Abraham's case, that reaping season unfolded at round about the same time as God declared it was time to send Ishmael away. Ishmael represented the veil of flesh over the eyes of Abraham's heart, which needed to be cut off and removed as Abraham's heart was circumcised. Once a veil is removed, one can see clearly to deal with the reality of situations before us.

After Ishmael and Hagar left Abraham's household, Abimelech, the Philistine king comes on the scene again. God has a way of bringing us back to face the point in our lives where compromise became strongly rooted. The juncture at which we move from milk to meat is a place of transition; where we get the opportunity to face ourselves and the consequences of sowing to the flesh - and also to bring closure and move on into maturity if we respond rightly. We find that the door to the flesh that Abraham opened, gave the enemy opportunity to steal from him:

Gen 21:25 When Abraham complained to and reasoned with Abimelech about a well of water [Abimelech's] servants had violently seized,

Earlier, Abraham may have walked away from his compromising encounter with material wealth but his actions gave the enemy licence to steal his well of living water. It looked like God was with Abraham in all he did, according to Abimelech, but it was not actually true. Abraham's spiritual wall of protection had become broken down through his self-interest and the most important source to sustain life had been taken from him. Abraham may have dug that well with his only own sweat and effort and legally it may have belonged to him but it would cost Abraham something to get it back.

Gen 21:28 Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs of the flock, *Gen 21:29* And Abimelech said to Abraham, What do these seven ewe lambs which you have set apart mean? *Gen 21:30* He said, You are to accept these seven ewe lambs from me as a witness for me that I dug this well. *Gen 21:31* Therefore that place was called Beersheba [well of the oath], because there both parties swore an oath.

There is a price to pay for restoration of our connection to the well of living water appointed us. That well symbolises the provision of the covenant we have entered into with God and theoretically it is ours to drink from. However, when we sow to the flesh and mixture resides in

our hearts, our access to that well is cut off and there is a price to pay to restore completely what God intended us to enjoy as covenant partners. Seven is the number of completion. Seven ewe lambs were paid by Abraham to persuade the enemy to relinquish his authority over that well.

Interestingly, two generations later, Jacob met Rachel at a well where she was watering sheep. Rachel means 'ewe' and Jacob had to work for seven years before he could marry her. The seven ewe lambs, which grand-father Abraham paid to return the well of Beersheba to the family, foreshadow the price Jacob would pay for the bride. Natural strength brought forth Ishmael, just as natural strength dug the well, but a perfect sacrifice, seven ewes and the sending away of Ishmael, was needed to fully enter into the benefits of the covenant waters. Even so, in this day, when the Lord intends the Body of Christ to move from milk to meat; from being the children of God to being the holy set-apart Bride of Christ, there is a price to be paid. And that price involves separation and full surrender.

Circumcision in the natural is painful, but done of the eighth day after birth, there is quick recovery. The Israelites who entered the Promised Land were, however, circumcised as adults. Their first encounter with their God after crossing the Jordan was painful as Joshua's flint stone confirmed that they were covenant sons. There is so much talk of entering the Promised Land; of walking in the manifestation of what God has promised us. Yet, we fail to understand that the first appointment is with the severity of God, with a stroke of His flint stone to remove the veil from the eyes of our hearts and separate us from the idols of our heart and the fruits of our own self-interest. We cannot journey to the stronghold of Jericho with Ishmael at our side. Victory and the full release of the Bride into the covenant plan of God is only laid hold of once we allow the Spirit to deal with all mixture and compromise in our hearts. The men who crossed the Jordan were adult, ready for war - except of one detail. They each had an appointment for a personal encounter with the flintstone! They had to submit to being marked as covenant sons, setting them apart from the world and its ways.

Each of us has a well of living water appointed by covenant right but in many cases, inner compromise and sowing to the flesh has made those waters inaccessible to us. Outwardly it seems we have prospered nevertheless - that is if we are using the world's standard to measure with. Yet, inwardly, we are dry, our hearts thirsty for that water we once tasted and we can't understand why we should be in this state when we can plainly see the infant stages of God's promise under our own roof and our lives are busy and full of activity.

It's time to allow the Holy Spirit to direct our attention to our blind spots, that place just outside our vision where our Ishmaels are sitting at the table. Just because Ishmael has grown strong, does not indicate God's approval of his presence in your heart or under your roof. Your own strength and effort may have brought him into existence but he is causing a veil over the eyes of your heart. Only your obedience to the instruction of the Holy Spirit will remove it forever. Ishmael is not appointed to walk the Promised Land with you. You may have been thrilled to move out of the wilderness and over the Jordan but there is more than the wilderness to separate from.

The extent of Abraham's grief at sending him away, tells us that he was Abraham's favourite son. He occupied the place in his heart that God needed the son of promise to occupy. Praise God that even though Abraham's heart was broken, he was obedient. He chose at that moment to turn from

walking in the fear of man to walking fully in the fear of God. And the enemy no longer had a place at the table - or a right to siphon off the living water appointed Abraham. Once the seven ewe lambs had been paid, a covenant of peace was made with Abimelech. His men would never harass Abraham or steal from him again as long as he resided there. When our ways please the Lord, He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us.

Finally Abraham had come to a place of having an undivided heart - of being fully covenanted with the God who called him. He had entered into a covenant with his mouth and yet, his heart took a while to catch up - but finally, at this place, Beersheba, he fully committed and surrendered to God.

Gen 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God.

There would be no more 'chewing the cud'; leaning on his own understanding; no more sowing to the flesh and reaping the losses incurred. He had come full circle, stepped into a place of taking responsibility for that which God had put under his stewardship and moving from milk to meat. He had become single-eyed, fully focussed and pressing towards what God had for him and counting all else as loss compared to this privilege. The tamarisk, an evergreen tree, represented his covenant with this Eternal God. The son of promise, Isaac, would also sit under its shade and experience the benefits of this covenant-keeping God as he sat at his father's knee and received his undivided attention.

Let us ask the Spirit to move us from milk to meat; to show us our Ishmaels and the results of our flesh-sowing hiding in our blind spots. We want to behold Him face to face, with no veils obscuring our view. The circumcising of our hearts once more tells us we are already standing with our feet on our land of Promise! We need now to separate from and forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead. Lets enter in with all our hearts into the covenant bought at such a price for us, holding nothing back, keeping nothing hidden, fully surrendered to the Lord, the Eternal God.

Selah