

The Wealth of the Child of God

by Watchman Nee

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's provision and grace, rather than relying on our own strength and expectations.

Scripture: Genesis 22:1

Topics: "Faith and Inheritance", "Grace and Provision"

Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes the profound lessons from the sacrifice of Isaac, urging believers to examine where their hope lies--whether in God alone or in the things they hold dear, like Isaac. He illustrates how Abraham's journey reflects God's purpose for His people, highlighting that while Abraham is the model of faith, Isaac represents the grace and inheritance bestowed upon believers. Isaac's life, characterized by passivity and acceptance, serves as a reminder that God's blessings are received, not earned, and that true victory comes from understanding our identity in Christ. Ultimately, Nee calls for believers to recognize their wealth as children of God, rooted in the grace and provision of the Father.

Transcript

THE sacrifice of Isaac is the believer's deepest lesson. It puts to us very straightly the question, Is our hope and expectation still in God, or is it in God and the Isaac we are holding on to? Or, worse still, is our hope in our Isaac only? After all, only God can fulfil His own purpose. When I was without Isaac, I looked to God. With Isaac, I still look to God just the same.

Abraham had come not only into the land but into the heart of God. He had become God's vessel, through whom God could do His work of recovery. This was no mere matter of justification by faith but of the man who was justified. God had secured the man He wanted.

Abraham's experience is God's standard in dealing with His people. Today God wants not only an Abraham but a corporate vessel. So Abraham's experience must be that of each individual, not only as such but also as a member of one body. For us all, His purpose is that we should together be Abraham's seed.

Ah, we may say, Abraham's experience is wonderful, only I am no Abraham. In Genesis 22 Abraham shines. After all these years I've never shone! Abraham is God's model vessel, certainly, but how can I ever arrive where Abraham did? God fulfilled His purpose in Abraham. Can He possibly do so in me?

Remember what we said at the beginning. God is not only the God of Abraham but also of Isaac and Jacob. This should serve to remind us at least that Abraham does not stand alone, complete and sufficient in himself as God's vessel for the fulfilment of His purpose. Isaac and Jacob were also needed along with him. Moreover, if we are to take our part in that purpose, we must know not only the God of Abraham but also the God of Isaac and of Jacob. We must have the experience of these two also, and as we look at their experience we shall find our questions begin to be answered. Abraham is the standard, it is true, but between him and the kingdom of Israel there are these other two. The corporate vessel is secured through the witness of all three. When God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, and when His people know Him as that, then the kingdom comes.

Abraham was the father par excellence. He had to learn to know God as Originator, but the peculiarity of God's work upon him was that it made him original in more senses than one. He was a true forefather in that he was a pioneer. He was the first man in Scripture to forsake everything; to 'cross over' to Canaan and so be designated a Hebrew; to have intimate fellowship with God as man to man; to beget an heir at one hundred years of age; to reject his own natural son in favour -of God's miraculous gift; and then to sacrifice that gift at God's behest.

But if Abraham was the father, immediately we see Isaac as a figure of Christ the Son. No history so typifies Christ as does that of Isaac. Constituted the heir by divine promise, he was born, not after the flesh but after the spirit (Galatians 4: 29). Apart from Christ there was no other of whom this was said. Let us briefly recount some other ways in which Isaac may be a type of Christ. To Sarah, Isaac was Abraham's only true son, the beloved (Hebrews 11. 17). Laid by his father on the altar, he was received back as from the dead to be to him the risen one. After Sarah herself died and her 'age of grace' was past, Isaac's bride, a figure of the Church, was brought to him from a far country. Yet she came to him as the Church of God's will, not brought in from without but born from within, for Rebekah and Isaac were of one blood, one family, as are Christ and His own. Moreover, Isaac really did occupy his inheritance. Abraham at one point went down into Egypt and Jacob returned to Mesopotamia, but Isaac was born, lived and died in Canaan. This is the Son who 'is in heaven', who never left His Father's bosom.

So in remarkable detail Isaac is a type of Christ. But leaving aside his typical significance, we must look now at the practical lessons to be learned from his experience. His is in fact the most ordinary experience in the Old Testament. He was a man seemingly without distinctive character, and in this respect is just the opposite of Abraham. Abraham did many things that no one else had done. Isaac did nothing that another had not already done.

Ishmael mocked Isaac-and Isaac said nothing. He took no initiative. He followed his father to Moriah and there allowed himself to be laid on the altar-without uttering a word. What his father did, he accepted. He merely asked one question; no more.

Even about his own marriage he had nothing to say. He knew nothing of the woman, and was not even consulted by his father about her choice. From the human standpoint everything he did was passive, negative. To us he is the son 'doing nothing of himself' (John 5. 19.).

At sixty Isaac himself had two sons. Abraham had had to take action in respect of his children; he had had to cast out his eldest son. Isaac did nothing of the kind; nor was he asked to lay his son on the altar. Everything was difficult for Abraham; everything was straightforward for Isaac. He could not even sin with originality; his sin at Gerah was a replica of his father's! Three wells were dug by Abraham; Isaac simply

reopened them. When Abimelech went to see Abraham, Abraham rebuked him for damage done to the wells. When he went to make a covenant with Isaac, Isaac only asked him why his servants had done such damage; he gave him no rebuke.

In his old age Isaac at last did have his own ideas about blessing his sons. He wanted to bless Esau. But God would not let him do something his father had not done; he too had to bless the younger son! In the end, even the tomb in which Isaac was laid was the one provided by his father.

In a sense Isaac is the complement of Abraham. Abraham embodies God's plan, God's standard. Isaac represents God's life, God's power. To see Abraham by himself, without the help of Isaac, is hard for us. Many see God's demands, and they cannot compass them, because they have not seen His provision. They see the standard, but not the life that satisfies that standard. Isaac gives us a picture of the life.

To Isaac Abraham gave all that he had (Genesis 24.36; 25. 5). Isaac did not have to labour, to toil, to spend time in order to get it. All was bestowed upon him. Abraham attained, through long trials; Isaac inherited, in a single outright gift. Of all that he received, nothing was his own work. He did not even have to travel to reach Canaan as his father did; he was born there.

So much for his relationship with his father. When we look at his relationship with God we find the same thing. The promise to Isaac in Genesis 26. 2-5 is exactly the same promise as is given to Abraham, and contains the words 'I will establish the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father'. There was nothing new in it that was not promised to Abraham already. And its fulfilment was stated to be 'because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws'. Again when the Lord appears to Isaac at Beersheba, He speaks of Himself as 'the God of Abraham thy father' and assures him that 'I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake' (26. 24). All was bestowed upon Isaac because he was Abraham's son.

This fact of bestowal and acceptance is the great characteristic of Isaac. The God of Isaac is God the Giver. He is the God who comes out to us. We must know Him in this way as well as knowing Him as Father. If we only know Him as the God of Abraham there is no approach to Him. As the God of Isaac He comes to us and gives us everything in His Son. None can go forward and attain to God's purpose unless he knows how to receive in this way. Romans chapter 7 offers us a picture of the man who has not yet found the God of Isaac. He is for ever under the law, and cries constantly: 'To will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not.' He has not seen that everything is offered to him in Christ, nor how full that provision is. The secret is receiving, not doing. The way through is not by the exercise of the will but by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8. 2). We know what the God of Abraham wants-we can't help knowing-but we don't know how to get there until we have found the God of Isaac. Victory, life, salvation, all is bestowed, not attained. When you are born into a wealthy home, it is very difficult to be poor! You are rich; you were born that way.

We never worked for our salvation, gradually scaling the heights until we attained to it. The Lord sought and saved us. Victory over sin is the same; it is received, not worked for. Oh, may we learn to praise God that He has provided for us such bounty in Christ!

Peter says that we 'have escaped' from the corruption that is in the world (2 Peter z. 4). He does not say that we 'are able to' escape, or that we 'hope to' escape, but that we have already done so. This is the God of Isaac. What God has done, we receive and enjoy. We are not constantly waiting, hoping, anxiously seeking for it. We are born into the home; we have it all. Inheritance is ours.

Let us get quite clear what the life of the believer is. It is not: 'from here to there'. It is: 'from there to here'. It starts in God. As Paul says, it is the parents who lay up for the children and not the other way round (2 Corinthians 12. 14).

Some of us force ourselves to do things we don't want to do and to live a life we cannot in fact live, and think that in making this effort we are being Christians. That is very far removed from what Isaac was. The Christian life is lived when I receive the life of Christ within me as a gift, to live by that life. It is the nature of the life of Christ not to love the world but to be distinct from it, and to value prayer and the Word and communion with God. These are not things I do naturally; by nature I have to force myself to do them.

But God has provided another nature, and He wants me to benefit from the provision He has made.

The only question Isaac asked was, 'Where is the lamb? The answer is full of meaning: 'God will provide himself the lamb.' That is the life of Isaac. We ask, and the answer is always the same: 'God himself will provide.' So Abraham called the place of resurrection :Jehovah-jireh'. Everything that is demanded, God Himself gives: that is the experience of Isaac. In Abraham God sets up a standard; in Isaac He shows us His storehouse. Strength, life, grace from God, all are ours to receive that we may measure up to the divine standard of a vessel for testimony.

We have looked at Abraham and Isaac; we must look for a moment at Isaac and Jacob, for Isaac lies between the two. In the comparisons just now before us, we have seen what God is giving to us. But we cannot stay there; we must also ask what it is that God is securing in us. We know that Christ is all. But in us there is a rival to Christ, namely, our own strength of nature. That too must find its answer, and when we have dealt with Isaac, that answer will be the theme of our final chapters.

Isaac received everything, and by his very passivity sets forth God's bountiful grace. Jacob lost everything, and in his trials exemplifies the rigors of God's chastening hand. In Isaac God ministers to us the triumphant resurrection life of Christ. In Jacob we see the other side of the coin; for God is compelled, for Christ's sake, to apply to us the discipline of the Spirit. The life of nature in us is being reduced progressively to its zero, that Christ may be fully displayed. God's work in Jacob will in fact be to make room for the God of Isaac.

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