

BFFs FOREVER

Studies in the Life of Abraham

Text

Genesis 25:1-10

Topic

As he readies for death

Abraham reveals his will for all of his sons

Title

"Will-I-abrahAm"

Introduction

Leona Helmsley left behind an unusual will after her death in 2007. The billionaire New York City real estate developer and hotel magnate had amassed a fortune estimated to be somewhere between \$5 billion and \$8 billion according to *The New York Times*. She requested that the majority of this money be given to charity, including animal welfare programs, and gave other, smaller amounts to various relatives. Helmsley left \$12 million to her 8-year-old dog, Trouble, but no money for two of her grandchildren, directly specifying in her will that she had "not made any provisions in this Will for my grandson... or my granddaughter... for reasons which are known to them."

At the time that this news was announced there were so many death threats against the dog that it began requiring \$100,000 worth of security each year.

In 2008 a Manhattan judge reduced the \$12 million figure to \$2 million and the remainder was given to charity. The two grandchildren left out of the will were awarded a total \$6 million from their grandmother's estate.

As we finish out the life of Abraham and come to his death we witness the apportioning of his worldly goods. It's more or less Abraham's will. He

leaves everything to Isaac and gives gifts to the sons born to him by a second wife, then sends them far away.

Abraham's will was certainly his to determine, but on the surface it doesn't seem fair to us.

The 'fairness' of Abraham's will is going to be our point of spiritual contact.

God has a 'will' for us. In our case God's will isn't what He has for us after we die. His will is the path He has us on right now.

God's will for your life doesn't always seem fair, especially when you compare it to His will for other people.

I'm going to say something that, at first hearing, may sound strange. You may or may not agree with it. Here it is: "God is not fair!"

We are fortunate, really, that God is not fair. Fairness would mean that everyone receive exactly what he or she deserves. If God were completely fair, we would all spend eternity in Hell paying for our sin, which is exactly what we deserve.

God's will for my life, and for your life, should not be analyzed by its fairness. Instead we should understand that God has custom designed a path for us to walk on by faith in order to experience spiritual fullness.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 God's Will Is A Matter For Faith, Not Fairness, To Apprehend, and #2 God's Will Is A Matter Of Fullness, Not Fairness, To Attain.

#1 God's Will Is A Matter
For Faith, Not Fairness, To Apprehend
(v1-6)

I have to think that if you asked Abraham at the end of his life if God was 'fair' that he'd look at you like you were speaking a foreign language. God had called him to turn to Him from idols and walk as a stranger and pilgrim

by faith in promises most of which he would never receive in this life. It wasn't a matter of fairness or unfairness but of following God by faith knowing that God had a wonderful spiritual path for Abraham to discover.

As we begin chapter twenty-five Abraham has about thirty-seven years left to live. Enter Keturah.

Genesis 25:1 Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

Exactly *when* Abraham married Keturah is unknown, but the verb "took" and the adjective "another" suggest it was *after* Sarah's death.

There's also a discussion over her legal status because in First Chronicles 1:32 she is referred to as Abraham's "concubine," not as his "wife." One possible solution is that she had been his concubine and later became his wife. Another is that these words were sometimes used interchangeably during the time of the patriarchs before the giving of the law to Moses.

We're going to understand all this to mean that Abraham married again after Sarah died.

Genesis 25:2 And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Genesis 25:3 Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

Genesis 25:4 And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

One objection people raise to these sons being born to Abraham in his old age is that the Bible indicates Abraham was as good as dead with regard to fathering a son at the time Isaac was born. So how are we to explain this?

J. Vernon McGee said,

When God does something, He really does it. This is the reason I believe that anything God does bears His signature. Right here we see that this man Abraham was not only able to bring Isaac into the world, but he now brings in this great family of children.

The name we are most interested in here is Midian. We will find later that Moses will go down into the land of Midian and take a wife from there.

Born from Abraham were Ishmael, Isaac and these six boys. Eight sons to split the inheritance of their father.

Genesis 25:5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

Genesis 25:6 But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

You and I read this and think, "Of course Abraham gave everything to Isaac. He was the son of the promise."

Theologically, that's great. But on a family level, if you put yourself in that home, it wasn't very fair to those other boys.

Your life is probably not going to be fair. But, as we've seen, when it comes to a relationship with God, **we don't want fairness!** We want grace and mercy, forgiveness and acceptance.

God's will for our lives, as it unfolds day-by-day, is to be apprehended by faith. We can trust His will for our lives to be good and perfect in light of His promise to change us from glory to glory into the image of Jesus.

His work in each of our lives is going to be a little different. God knows you intimately, knows what makes you tick, as it were. You are unique. He can't do everything exactly the same in all of our lives and that sometimes leads us to conclude He is unfair.

In the Book of Acts, James and Peter were both imprisoned for preaching about Jesus. James was quickly beheaded. Peter, before he could be executed, was miraculously released from prison by an angel. Was that fair?

Fairness shouldn't come into our thinking about it. God's will for James was different than it was for Peter.

God's will for Peter was different than it was for John. After Jesus rose from the dead, as He and Peter were sharing breakfast on the beach, Jesus told Peter the manner of his death. He would be crucified when he was old. Peter then asked Jesus how John was going to die. The Lord answered, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me."

I like that! "What is that to you? You follow Me." The Lord has His unique plan for each of us.

When I think my life is unfair, I am not trusting God to know what is ultimately best for me.

- Thinking my "life's not fair" can rush me into, or out of, a marriage.
- Thinking my "life's not fair" can rush me into, or out of, a job... Or a church... Or almost anything.

Walking by faith, however, will improve **all** of those circumstances because I am in a place spiritually where I can receive God's grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His acceptance.

One of the great animated villains is Scar in *The Lion King*. He will ultimately be responsible for the death of his brother, King, Mufasa, as well as Simba's flight into the wilderness and away from his calling.

The very first line of dialog from Scar establishes his worldview. He catches a mouse in his enormous paw and says, "Life's not fair, is it? You see, I... well, I shall never be king. And you... shall never see the light of another day."

"Fairness" is a bad worldview to hold. Instead walk by faith along the path God has set.

#2 God's Will Is A Matter
Of Fullness, Not Fairness, To Attain
(v7-10)

BFF's FOREVER - Studies in the Life of Abraham

It ought to be our goal in life to attain to a spiritual fullness:

Job 42:17 So Job died, old and full of days.

2 Chronicles 24:15 But Jehoiada grew old and was full of days, and he died; he was one hundred and thirty years old when he died.

These guys were “old” AND they were “full of days.” I see a distinction. Old age, by itself, is nothing to get excited about. It *is* something exciting if when you get there you are experiencing being “full,” that is, spiritually satisfied.

Genesis 25:7 This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.

A century of walking with God was behind him. Abraham had experienced much and not all of it was good. He'd made a few mistakes, had some misunderstandings. He's experienced danger, disappointment, and the death of loved ones.

The most fantastic thing about that one hundred years was that God called Abraham His “friend.” Isaiah 41:8, Second Chronicles 20:7, and James 2:23 all describe Abraham as the friend of God.

Charles Spurgeon had this to say:

I think I hear you say, “Yes, it was indeed a high degree to which Abraham reached - so high that we cannot attain unto it. It would be idle for us to dream of being accounted friends of God.” My Brothers and Sisters, I entreat you, think not so! We, also, may be called friends of God... Let me read to you the words of our blessed Lord in the 15th chapter of John - “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you.” It is, then, within reach! Jesus, Himself, invites us to live and act and be His friends!

Do you think of yourself as “the friend of God?” If so, are you a good friend?

Spurgeon went on to say this:

BFF's FOREVER - Studies in the Life of Abraham

There must be a continual communion. The friend of God must not spend a day without God and he must undertake no work apart from his God. You cannot be a friend of God if your communion with Him is occasional, fitful, distant, broken. If you only think of Him on Sundays... *you cannot be His friend!* Friends love each other's society - the friend of God must abide in God, walk with God - and then he shall dwell at ease.

It's not a rebuke; it's a reminder. Friendship closes any distance that might have developed between you and Jesus.

Today there is a trend within the church, among Christians, to *create* rather than *close* distance with God. You'll hear Christians talk about returning to a more formal worship service, adopting what they are told are the 'ancient practices' of the church. If you've never experienced that kind of thing it can seem somewhat moving. Well, it **is** moving - it's moving you farther from the Lord! He wants to be your friend. Be a good one.

Genesis 25:8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

Getting to a "good old age" is not something we have much say-so in. None of us knows the number of our days - only that our days are numbered. But whether we die "old" or young, we can be "full of years" if we are looking to the Lord to satisfy us.

Genesis 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite,

Abraham lived before the law was given to Moses but we can suppose that burial customs didn't change all that much. We know from the law that burial was to take place within 24 hours of death (Deuteronomy 21:23). There was no time to send out notices of a funeral and no waiting for folks to arrive.

This tells us that Ishmael was already on scene. His presence at the death and burial of Abraham indicates Ishmael had some sense of submission to God's will for he and Isaac. He didn't hate his dad for having been sent away as a teen ager. His dad loved him, and he loved Abraham.

Genesis 25:10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

BFF's FOREVER - Studies in the Life of Abraham

This verse puts fullness versus fairness into its proper perspective. God had promised to give Abraham so much land! In the end, Abraham had to buy a small field with a burial cave as his only real estate holdings.

Did he live a defeated life? Did he wish he had remained in Ur and died a successful businessman rather than a nomad? Did he look back over his life and wish he had done it his way rather than going God's way?

No. He just kept looking for that city whose builder and maker is God, eternal in the heavens. He was full because he was *fully satisfied* in God.

Life is not fair. It's a matter of faith and of fullness. Take with you these precious words of Jesus: "What *is that* to you? **You follow Me.**"

