

ABRAHAM DIED SATISFIED WITH LIFE

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And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. (Gen. 25:8 NAS)

Abraham died satisfied with life? If the Lord were to take us now, will we also go feeling satisfied with life?

When I read this verse in my morning devotion time, something in this verse caught my attention. Why did the author express how Abraham died? Not only did Abraham die at ripe old age but also an old man satisfied with life. This is the part that caught my attention. He died satisfied with life. To be satisfied means to lacking nothing, a life that is completely filled or fulfilled. No sadness, no regrets. Peaceful, contented and comforted.

Why did the author add another adjective to describe how he died? Why add that adjective that he 'died satisfied with life'? What does the author want to reveal about Abraham's life? Why did he die satisfied with life?

Was it because he died at a ripe old age that made him satisfied with life?

Yes, he did live up to 175 years. Do you think it was the old age that made him satisfied? Would you feel satisfied if you can live to 175 years old? Maybe we think living a long life is a blessing.

But psalmist did say that living such long life is also packed with toil and trouble in Ps 90:10,

"The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span[a] is but toil and trouble;"

Recently, we visited a sister who lived alone in Kemaman. She lived alone and she is past 70s. She has poor health, cannot really cook for herself and needed help for people to help buy food for her. I saw how difficult it is to live to ripe old age.

Unless one has good health, some loved ones to look after, living a life past 70s or 80s or over 100, with poor health can be a miserable span of time. Can you imagine living with dementia or in old folks home. Not easy for themselves as well as for those who have to care for them. Living in such condition can be a life of loneliness if we don't have friends or loved ones around us. What a terrible period of loneliness one needs to go through. Abraham's wife died earlier than him. Abraham mourned and wept for his wife. We saw that it could probably be due to loneliness that he later married another woman called Keturah. So, we see that maybe for Abraham, living a ripe old age may be good for him as he has Keturah but may not be the sole reason for his satisfaction.

Was it riches then that made his life satisfied?

Do you think Abraham lived and died satisfied because he had everything in life? Not all rich men or women died satisfied with life. Many regretted they spent too much time in their careers and neglected their health, their families and loved ones. What mountain of riches they have laboured, they cannot bring with them when they died. Some regretted the way they lived their lives, and are fearful of the consequences, whether you like it or not, deep in people, they have to face and give an account to God.

We read in Gen 24:35 that Abraham had great wealth.

"And the LORD has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys."

Abraham didn't seek for the riches mentioned while he was living on earth. According to Abraham's servant, it was God who blessed him with all the riches, possessions, flock, silver and gold.

Abraham had a nephew, called Lot. Both his nephew and Abraham had much flocks, so much so that there were not enough pastures for their cattle to graze on, so their herdsmen quarrelled. We saw that Abraham could have chosen the best part of the land if he was really interested in the things of this world but he gave to his nephew to be the first to choose the land before them.

Gen 9-11 "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left." 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.

For Abraham, not only riches didn't matter to him, he didn't seek to possess things of this world, he also did not look to men to bless him with material riches. When the king of Sodom wanted to give him possessions. He said this in Gen 14:22-23.

Genesis 14:22-23 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"

He will not take a thread or a sandal thong from the king of Sodom lest the king of Sodom would think that he was the one who made Abraham rich. For Abraham, he looks for blessings from God whether it is material or promises that comes from God and not from men.

So, to Abraham he cared for only blessings that come from God, promises that comes from God and nothing more.

So, what exactly make Abraham 's life and death satisfied? I think there is this one reason that I can see very obvious in Abraham's life. It was his extraordinary faith in God. It was this relationship that he had with God. His extraordinary trust, faith in God that made him satisfied in his life. He died satisfied with life because God was his friend and he was God's friend.

Abraham believed, his faith is expressed in his obedience towards Yahweh God. Abraham's faith was not without works. For Abraham, his faith in God is expressed in total obedience and total trust in God. We saw that when God first called him to leave his homeland, the Ur of Chaldeans, he obeyed.

Genesis 12:1 The LORD said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

In Hebrew 11: 8-10 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

In Gen 12.1 God called him out of his homeland, Ur of Chaldeans, a place of comfort, to a place he didn't know where God was leading him to, but he obeyed God.

He took his wife and nephew and followed God's leading. In Hebrews, we saw it was faith/trust in God that moved him into action. He lived a pilgrim's life, an alien's life in a foreign land, he had no fixed place where he could call home. He lived in tents moving from one place to another facing all kinds of weather conditions. (look at the map)

Do we understand what Abraham had to go through travelling from Ur of Chaldeans to Canaan to Egypt having to live in tents? It wasn't an easy journey. Actually, I didn't know much about living in tents until Setapak Church had a few times of church camp where we set up tents. On one of our camps, we experienced heavy rain and the rain water drenched our beds and we couldn't sleep for a few nights. Another time, we met very powerful wind and rain which almost blown the fly sheet which was covering our food. And the last tent camp, we met with extreme heat. In our modern-day tenting camp, we already experienced what it was like facing the weather.

Can you imagine what Abraham had to go through, he also had to go through strong wind, strong rain, extreme cold and extreme heat as he had to travelled through deserts and rugged terrains. Imagine travelling in horses and donkeys, with all the loved ones and their possessions with them. Setting up the tents and keeping the tents and setting the tents and removing the tents and continue the journey through all the weather conditions. Yet, Abraham never complained but continued to trust and obey God's leading, God's provision and protection even though he didn't know where God was leading him.

Not only was Abraham obedient to God's leading but his eyes were constantly stayed on heavenly things not on earthly things. In Heb 11:10 we saw why Abraham gave Lot the first choice to choose the land before them because he had no interest in earthly treasures. He was looking for the city whose foundation, architect and builder is God. He sets his heart on heavenly things not on earthly things, seeking before him the Kingdom of God.

Abraham's faith in God when tested by God to sacrifice Isaac.

Genesis 22:2 Then God said: Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you

In his life, God promised him a son when he was 75 years old. Abraham patiently waited till he was hundred years old. 25 years of waiting for God's promises to come true. And now, God tested him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. When God asked him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice, he didn't doubt God or got angry with God. No questioning or grumbling. Probably if we were in Abraham's shoes, we might complain and grumble. We might get angry with God. God, why did you promised me an heir and then I waited 25 years to have this child. You promised to bless all my generation through this child and now you want me to sacrifice him to you? What kind of God are you? Maybe we will think and act like this? But we saw Abraham in his obedience, prepared his journey, brought his son to the land Moriah where God commanded him to do. When he was about to offer up his son as a sacrifice, God stopped him.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18 God had told him, "Through Isaac descendants will carry on your name," 19 **and he reasoned that God could even raise him from the dead, and in a sense he received him back from there**

This is Abraham's faith in his God. He thought that God would still be able to raise Isaac from the dead. He trusted in God's promises, never waiver. Even if God were to ask him to offer up Isaac, God can still raise him up from the dead. This was how Abraham's trust and faith was in God.

Because of Abraham's utter obedience offering up even his one and only son, God blessed him richly. Abraham had not withheld the one whom he loved dearly to God. Gen 22:16-17 16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Abraham's faith was absolute in God that he was called friend of God. To Abraham faith produces action/works expressed in love, trust and obedience.

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ".....he was called the friend of God. (Jas. 2:23). Because of Abraham's faith, because he believed in God he was considered righteous. He was called a friend of God. How many people in the bible can be called friend of God? Abraham was the only one in the whole bible who was called a friend of God.

Indeed Abraham was God's friends. God was also Abraham's friend. Abraham didn't self-proclaim to be friend of God. But it was God who called him His friend. Isaiah 41:8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, offspring of Abraham my friend—

We saw God himself calling Abraham as His friend.

Many can claim to be God's friends but how many can God claim to be His friends? Yet, Abraham was called the friend of God. We saw that God couldn't hide from Abraham his intention to destroy

Sodom and Gomorrah. God had to reveal to Abraham about his plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. We saw that when Abraham heard from God, he was bargaining with God to spare the lives in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gen 18: 23-24 23 And Abraham came near and said, "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? From 45, 40, 30, 20, down to 10 righteous within the city.

We read in Gen 19:29 29 Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

Even in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God remembered Abraham, his friend, and He delivered Lot out of the midst of the overthrown city.

God remembered Abraham, his friend's plea for the lives to be saved, God spared Abraham's nephew and his family. Can we see the friendship God had with Abraham and the friendship that Abraham had with God. That bond of intimacy. One who would not hide His plan and the other will not withhold his precious son from Him.

We also saw Abraham's love and absolute trust in God and His promises. He didn't withhold his one and only promised son (by God) to God.

Now we saw the reason why Abraham died satisfied with life.

It was because of his special friendship with God throughout his life. He was able to walk with God throughout his life. God is not intellectual knowledge but a real friend whom he can trust. From the day God called him out from Ur of Chaldeans to where God led him, was a God centred life. A life able to enjoy the presence of God, a life protected, guided and blessed by God. God was so precious to Abraham and Abraham was so dear to God as well. We saw the mutual love and mutual friendship between God and Abraham.

We may think even the way Abraham think may be stupid or dumb but we can see that his faith in God is so pure and child-like. Even though he had to wait 25 years for God's promise to materialise in his life. Finally, when he had his son, God wanted him to sacrifice his son. How can God who promise to bless his generations through Isaac asked him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice? But Abraham thought that if God ordered him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice, God will also be able to raise him up from the dead. He never doubted God but just had simple faith in God. The bible said that he was always looking for the city whose foundation, architect and builder is God. In Hebrew 11:10, Abraham set his eyes, his heart on things above, seeking for the kingdom of God. He goal of his life is not focus on what is earthly but what is heavenly.

Hebrew 11:10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

What about us? What gives you the greatest satisfaction when we have to leave this world?

To me, what makes me died satisfied with this life is whether I have the assurance of truly knowing God in the fullest? Not intellectually but truly as a friend like Abraham. Have I been obedient to God in the absolute sense like Abraham? Has and will God accept or call me His friend? Do I have the assurance in my God's faithfulness? Will God accept me into His kingdom? What assurance do I have that I will be accepted into his kingdom?

Whether God will accept us into his kingdom, whether we would have the assurance that God will accept us into his kingdom depends on whether we have put our faith and assurance in Him now. Can God count you as His friend?

Have we experience the reality of God's friendship, not just intellectually but experientially? Have we pleased him like Abraham did in our lives? How do we prove to God we are His friends?

Our life is very fragile. Like a vapour, here today and gone in a moment. In what way can we have that assurance to leave this world satisfied and contented?

Do not only live for this world? Paul said that if we only live for this world in this life, we are of all men most pitiful. If we only set our minds, hearts on what is earthly, we will miss what is heavenly.

Last year, I cannot remember when, I felt quite okay the whole day in church. However, after church, while we were having homemakers. I felt feverish and unwell and the feverishness intensified. Even after wearing some warm cloths I still felt very cold. My teeth were chattering. The coldness was so intense that I had difficulty breathing. My blood pressure was extremely high. I told Pastor to bring me to emergency at hospital because I didn't feel normal. I was immediately admitted and given strong antibiotic drips. I found out later that I had kidney infection. It was so sudden. If my condition cannot respond to the strong antibiotic, I might not live. So, one moment one can feel well and next moment can be seriously sick.

While we still have this breathe of life, let us make the goal of our life to pursue to love our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. May Yahweh God be able to call us His friends.

Everyday, every moment- develop the love for God in our lives. Seek in every aspect of our life to put him as our priority. Trust God in His promises. Even though many things we don't understand but we must learn to trust him fully like Abraham did. Even though he didn't understand God's actions but he trusted God wholly without doubting. He offered up Isaac, his only son to God. God delighted in Abraham's action. He was able to see the heart of Abraham towards Him. Can God find in us, a total heart towards Him that we withheld nothing best from Him?

Romans 10:11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."

Recently, my coworker shared with me when she first returned to Canada after training. She had to look for a job because she has 3 children to look after. And she told God she needed a full time job. And God to her no full time job but part time. While she was looking for the job, someone told her there was a vacancy at a certain bank. She applied and was offered the job full time. She was so

happy and her heart was so tempted but her mouth must speak what God told her and that is only part time. It was a struggle. She told the bank that she can only work part time. Reluctantly, she had to turn down the offer. After a few week, the same bank called up to offer her a full time job again. And she told the bank again, she can only work part time, please call when you have a part time job to offer. After some time again, she again received a phone call again from the same bank again offering her full time job. She found the situation weird. As she was trying to obey God, struggling to be obedient, here the same bank called her 3 times. It is really a testing. So she told the bank again that she cannot work full time. She shared this experience with the church. Many thought she must be crazy to turn down a full time job when many are out of job and having difficult time to look for a job. But she found that when she learnt to be obedient. When she needed a job. Someone will call to ask her if she know of anyone who has such and such criteria. She said she has all the criteria. So she went for the interview. When she was there, she was shocked. There were so many people going for the interview. Time was bad, people need job. She thought to herself, she will not get the job and she was going to leave the interview place but God told her to fill in the form and go for the interview. She obediently did so, went for the interview. And lo and behold, out of almost 600 pax(cannot remember the exact number), only 17 applicants were selected. She was one of the 17 chosen for the job. When we obeyed God, God is faithful to us. He will never disappoint us. But first we must seek to obey and trust Him first.

When we put our trust and obey God, we will experience his faithfulness towards us. He is faithful to those who are faithful to him.

Whoever loves Him will be known by Him.

1 Corinthians 8:3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

Abraham truly loved God. he didn't withheld from God his only son when he was tested. God said to Abraham. Now I know you fear me. God treated Abraham as His friend. We can put this word into test in our lives. Experience His trustworthiness. Seek to build our friendship with God.

Where is your assurance today? Is it on things of this world or on God the giver of eternal life? Earthly treasures cannot give us eternal life. Only seeking assurance in things above, seeking assurance in God will give us eternal life.

Many people want to be Christians so that they can have eternal life. Many are zealous when they first came to the Lord, they confessed their sins, repented and went through baptism and after baptism, their lives stop there. Many Christians become stagnant after their baptism. They failed to seek to know God after baptism but they got themselves straying into the world. We have forgotten that baptism is the beginning of our walk with God in Christ.

What is our relationship with God now? I hope that we will take this message to heart since we have committed our lives to God. The only way we can have the assurance like Abraham to be satisfied in his death in his life is to imitate the faith of Abraham toward God, to learn from Abraham's

extraordinary faith/obedience/trust in God that made him a friend of God. May God accept us and call us as His friend? Are you, are we God's friends?

While we have the breathe of life –

- 1) Let's make God your goal in our life, seek to build our friendship with God. Seek to love him with all our heart, strength, soul and mind.
- 2) Seek to do the will of God in our life. Ask God: Are you happy with me? Are you happy with the things I am doing now?
- 3) Be quick to repent of our sins and draw near to Him.
- 4) Be sensitive to listen and obey Him

I hope the message today can help us to set our life straight before God.