



LAYING DOWN YOUR ISAAC

FOR THOSE WHO ARE FACING CRUSHING DISAPPOINTMENT

At some time or other in our faith-journey we all have to deal with the issue of disappointed expectations. Things we believe God has said which have not materialised, Scriptures we have 'stood on' which have not born fruit, or fervent prayers which have not been answered. What we do in those times is important.

Many years ago, the church we were leading collapsed after a number of very traumatic years. I was devastated, my faith, hope and prayers had been totally invested in that ministry; all my prophetic encouragements lay in ashes.

In the aftermath came huge doubts; if I hadn't heard God correctly over these things, what else had I miss-heard? And there was also the issue of letting go. With all of my hopes and dreams invested in that ministry, it was a real challenge to relinquish it.



It was a formative time. Learning to hold firmly onto the Lord, and stand only on His goodness and faithfulness, rather than on my understanding, was huge lesson to learn. We all think we see perfectly, but looking back, the old certainties are not quite so clear-cut. We all walk according to our particular worldview, a worldview which is informed by our understanding of the Word, and changes as we grow in our relationship with the Lord. That imperfect worldview obviously shapes what we hear, which is why Paul says we know and prophesy 'in part' [1 Corinthians 13:9]. As my understanding of the Lord's 'Kingdom plans' has developed and matured over time, these days, decades later, I think I would 'hear' differently in the same situation.

The story of Abraham gives us some way-markers along this difficult path. Early on in their walk, Abraham and Sarah had attempted to make their interpretation of God's Word happen by their own efforts, and in doing so completely missed the Lord. Their imperfect revelation had a hugely negative effect on others (namely Hagar, and Ishmael), as does ours, and we need the grace and humility to accept responsibility when that happens.

Later, Abraham learned to accept the physical realities of his declining years, and put his focus not on his own abilities, but on the faithfulness of God [Romans 4:19-21]. Then, after the birth of Isaac, he was challenged further in trust. Although all God's promises to Abraham were bound up in Isaac; the Lord asked him to lay them down—to actually put them on the altar, by making a sacrifice of Isaac.

Hebrews tells us that Abraham reasoned that he would receive Isaac back from the dead [Hebrews 11]; however, in choosing to obey, Abraham had to lay down his own ideas regarding the fulfilment of God's promises. This was about declaring his trust in the Lord, even when he didn't understand. Any lingering tendency to manipulate or control was put to rest. We can be sure Abraham held things lightly ever after; his trust was not in his own interpretation of the Word of God, but in the One who is faithful.

When things don't go the way we expect, when we don't get what we think we have heard, or what we have been 'contending' for, we also have to sacrifice our 'Isaacs'. We really do have to loose our grip on our precious convictions, and lay them down before Him. Then we take a position of trust, and humble ourselves before Him.

Anything that we have believed that has truly come from the Lord will be worked out by Him—not necessarily in the form we expected, because we only see in part. But sometimes—and it happens to everyone—we are just plain wrong; our worldview is inadequate, and our pronouncements have been faulty.

In those cases, let's confess our mistakes, ask forgiveness of any we have hurt, and ask the Lord to cover them with His grace; and then let's realign ourselves with the Lord, who gives beauty for the ashes of repentance.

If you are facing crushing disappointment today, humble yourself before Him, laying down your precious convictions, and let His grace wash over you.

Father I come to you.

I feel devastated by.....

Everything I have hoped, believed for, declared and expected lies in ashes around my feet. I have invested myself in these things, and they have not happened. I feel utterly undone, but You are holy and faithful.

I humble myself before You. Take these things—everything I have believed and declared. I cast them at Your feet. Lord, send in the refining fire, burn off everything that was not from You, leaving only what is pure in your sight. And give me the grace of an unflinching gaze.

Reveal to me any area where my errors have hurt people around me; where my passion has brought condemnation and judgement, or where I have lacked love for my neighbour.

And show me the gold, Lord; the things I have believed which have eternity written into them, despite the present circumstances; and work them out, Lord, according to Your plan and purpose. I choose to put my trust in You, rather than my own understanding.

You are the Alpha and the Omega, my beginning and end.

Amen