**God’s Higher Will**

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,****2****that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”****3****Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,****4****“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.****5****No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.****6****I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.****7****And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.****8****And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:1-8, ESV)*

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***15****And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.****16****I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”****17****Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”****18****And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!”****19****God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.****20****As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation.****21****But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”* ***22****When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. (Genesis 17:15-22, ESV)*

 God’s higher will is carried out through His word and promises and not through man’s planning.

 Greetings in the Lord to all of you as we talk today about God’s higher will. Indeed, God has both a general goal and a specific one. The first has to do with higher level plans, while the second pertains to more detailed happenings as man experiences them. Today, we’re going to talk about God’s general and highest-level will, which is expressed through the Scriptures from the very beginning of time, but especially through Abraham’s family. Again, God’s higher will happens according to His word and promises and not through man’s planning. Let’s see how that is through this account of Abraham in Genesis 17.

 God’s higher will is based on His own promises and plans. In the Scripture passage above, Abraham experiences a second visitation of God (the first one being in chapter 15). Within that experience, God repeats His promise to him, along with establishing a couple of conditions: first, Abraham needed to “walk before” God; in other words, he needed to live under God’s watchful eye and supervision, and not independently of God, living according to the plans of his own heart. Second, he needed to be blameless – i.e., no wrong or blemish was to be found on his life. People should not be able to say that Abraham did this or that unjust thing regarding them.

 On the other hand, Abraham responded to God’s revelation with humility. He bowed down before him, something that is uniquely recorded only to him in Scripture, done as worship and deep respect.

 Afterwards, God gives the sign of the covenant, which was not the covenant itself, but the physical sign on the male human body, which was circumcision. The true covenant was God’s allegiance to His people. Of course, His expectation was that His people would in turn be faithful to Him as He was to them. It is exactly in that dynamic that we find God great and higher will. God wants to be the God of His people – and he promises to be faithful to Abraham, but with the expectation that Abraham will also have the same allegiance. It is true that the physical land was part of the promise, but for us, as part of the Christian world, that land promise expands to include the whole world and even beyond it, to include eternal life, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

 In addition, God’s promise to Abraham was going to be fulfilled not through a human ingenuity, whose symbol was Ishmael, but through allegiance to God’s promise, which Isaac represented, having been born according to the Lord’s promise to Abraham. Eventually, as we know, it was through Isaac’s bloodline that our Lord Jesus would be born.

 It is said that you can lean on God’s promises without breaking them. Today, we are enjoying the promise of salvation in Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. All that is expected of us is to receive Jesus, to follow Him, and to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit. That means that as Abraham was called to walk in God’s presence, so are we. If we stay faithful to God, He will be faithful to us when the time is right. More specifically – if we remain loyal to him in the face of temptations, God will give His own sign of His loyalty to us, His reward in response. When the time comes to speak about our faith to another and we open our mouth to do so, God will help and we will express ourselves according to the Spirit’s leading, provided that our heart is clean and obedient to the Lord.

 Therefore, God’s higher will takes place through his Word and promises, and not via man’s planning. May the Lord give us the ability to live according to His will, with patience and faith. Amen.