

Sermon – 12/09/2003 pm

Without Delay

Study Text: Genesis 24: 54-67

Abraham's servant was sent on a mission – to find a wife for his son Isaac. Two conditions were demanded for his bride – she

- must be from his relatives
- must come and live in Canaan.

The angel of the Lord went before him leading him to the house of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and to Rebekah. She met the conditions stipulated, and through answered prayer the servant believed she was in fact the one appointed by the Lord. God gave him wisdom to be able to convince her family that this was God's special will – that *this thing comes from the Lord*. Rebekah was given to him to take back and marry Isaac.

Was his mission now accomplished? Well yes – we saw last time. He thanked the Lord with all his heart when he heard the positive answer from Bethuel her father and Laban her brother. But not fully accomplished. He was still in the home of Laban. He was still a long way from the Promised Land. He still had to get her back there.

The oath he swore to his master Abraham was still in force. If the woman was not willing to come back with him he would be released from the oath. He was not to take Isaac away from Canaan under any circumstances. So it is that in the passage before us today Rebekah gives her consent to go. But it comes about in unusual circumstances.

The servant and his party ate and drank and rested the night. He arose early the next day hoping to get away that day. He requested leave of his hosts as per custom. Everything had gone well so far. The Lord had guided him in a wonderful way and given him success – he had prospered him in his way – verse 56.

Remember why his mission was so important. He had come to get a wife for Isaac yes – and who was Isaac? Abraham's son. And as Abraham's son he would inherit the promise the Lord gave to Abraham – through you *all the families/peoples of the earth shall be blessed. In Isaac shall your seed be called*. The seed of Abraham would be a blessing to the whole world.

This mission therefore was fundamentally important in the universal and eternal purposes of God. And as such would not have gone unnoticed by the enemy of God. Yes Satan would have been seeking a way to frustrate this mission. Abraham said the Lord would send his angel ahead of him. His servant knew the importance of his mission. Right from the beginning he wary of any delay – verse 33.

The next morning when he asked to be sent on his way, Laban and his mother asked for Rebekah to stay a few more days. 'At least ten days' more is the preferred translation although it can also

be translated as 'a year or so'. Whatever the time frame Abraham's servant would not entertain this request for a moment. Why?

It seemed harmless enough. They would not see Rebekah again for a long time. Surely it was only natural to want her to stay a bit longer. What could be wrong with that? Was the servant in a hurry to get back before Abraham died or what was the reason for his hurry?

Could it have been that he did not want to give any opportunity for a change of mind? He did not want to give the Evil one any opportunity to upset this *thing that comes from the Lord*. If it was from the Lord then let there be no delay. He was in a foreign place. He was vulnerable in many ways. Maybe more dowry would be demanded. Although promised, the girl was not yet in his possession. He was very aware of his. This was no time to relax.

It often happens like this when we are called by the Lord. We pray and pray and the Lord answers our prayer – and then we begin to have doubts. We fear that we cannot step out of our comfort zone. We find some reason to delay doing what the Lord calls us to do.

It happened to me when we were called to India. After much prayer we applied to the mission agency and were accepted. But at that time a great job opportunity came up in the Govt dept I was in and so I applied for it. I got distracted and actually withdrew my application to mission. Satan knows how to distract us from the Lord's work. We must beware; we must not delay and give him opportunity.

Look in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas called by the Holy Spirit to go out and preach the gospel. Was it easy for them? No – they had opposition. There was this sorcerer – a Jew called Bar Jesus who opposed them 'seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith' (Acts 13:8).

Opposition from within or opposition from without. Abraham's servant was giving no place for Satan to work. Delay could destroy his mission. *Do not hinder/delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.*

Some people put off answering the voice of the Holy Spirit in their hearts calling them to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They think there is plenty of time – they are only young. Little do they realize that delay is a device of the Devil. He always says you have plenty of time, meaning he has plenty of time to distract you. Remember now is the day of salvation. Do not delay.

Abraham's servant was at odds with Rebekah's guardians. They wanted to keep her longer. He wanted to go. In the providence of God they decided to ask Rebekah herself. This was probably not necessary within the custom but in doing so we learn that God had touched her heart. He had given her a willing heart.

It was a big step for her to go off with this man to a strange land to marry a man she had never met. But the Lord gave her a willing heart and so the second condition Abraham gave his servant, a condition given under oath, was fulfilled – that she must be willing to come to Canaan.

Her mother and brother accepted her decision. They helped her get her things together ready to leave. Her nurse was ready to go with her. They sent her away with a blessing which may have been customary but in the context was prophetic.

Our sister may you become the mother of thousands, of ten thousands, And may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them

Remember the words the Lord spoke to Abraham after he was tested. Genesis 22:17: *multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand of the seashore; and your descendants will possess the gate of their enemies.*

These were words of promise. They were words declaring that through the children of Isaac and Rebekah – more precisely through **the seed** even our Lord Jesus Christ the gates of the enemy would be torn down. All the power of the evil one would be overthrown – is now overthrown – in the victory the Lord Jesus Christ won through his death and resurrection.

So the servant took Rebekah and departed verse 61. He set out towards the promise land. He set out towards Abraham's household. The great promise of the Lord given to Abraham is a step closer to being fulfilled. He had a long journey ahead but he now has in his possession a wife for Abraham's son. A wife who fulfilled the conditions set by God's command and was appointed by the Lord in response to the servant's prayer.

Back in Canaan Isaac was again living down in the south/Negev. He went out in the evening to meditate or to pray in the field. That day as he lifted his eyes he saw the camels coming. He recognized them as those of his father. The servant also recognized Isaac and told Rebekah who the man was.

They dismounted from the camels and in doing so Rebekah took a veil and covered her face – a customary act of modesty in the presence of men. The servant shared with Isaac his master all that had happened on his journey. There is no mention of Abraham here. Maybe he was still in Hebron where he lived most of the time. Isaac as we know was 40 years old so was effectively in charge of Abraham's affairs.

Isaac took her to the tent that had been his mother's. She was to take on the role of matriarch. It is hard to know to what extent he was still missing his mother – it was some three years later. But he is nevertheless comforted and pleased to take Rebekah as his wife. *He took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her.* Love does not necessarily have to precede marriage but must follow. All this was according to the perfect will and divine purpose of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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