

ABRAHAM

Part 2

Genesis 22:1-19

Intro: Since starting this series on the “Men of the Bible,” I have given one message on each man – until we got to Abraham. But so much is recorded in Scripture about Abraham, that I am having to take two Sundays on him. And I could take even more. But my main purpose in this series is to deal particularly with the men in the Bible, learning from them how they walked with the Lord so that we can profit from their experiences in our walk with the Lord.

Hebrews 11 is a wonderful help in this because it shows how some of the men, and women, of the OT lived by faith. It was by faith that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice to God than Cain did. It was by faith that Enoch walked with God. It was by faith that Noah build the ark in a time before there had been any rain anywhere on the earth. And it was by faith that left home to go to a country even before God had told him where that country was. And it was by faith he believed that God would give him a son even when he and Abraham were to old to have children. And although I am not dealing with the ladies of the Bible, I ought to point out that it was by faith that Sarah in her old age received strength to have a child because she knew that God would be faithful to his promise.

Now in none of these cases did the people I have mentioned decide what they wanted to do, and then acted in faith to get God to do it. Abel didn't make up his mind what kind of a sacrifice he should bring to God; God had revealed to them the sacrifice that He wanted Abel to bring, and, acting on God's word to him, he was acting in faith, trusting God to receive it. Enoch did not just try to do his best in his relationship with the Lord. God obviously showed him how to live a godly life, and by the grace of God he sought to live like God wanted him to live. He lived by faith. Noah didn't just decide to build an ark. God told him to do it, and even gave him the dimensions, the whole plan. His faith came into play because he believed that God was going to judge the world, and do it in a way that had never been done before.

Likewise, Abraham was not like some people are today in that he just decided that he wanted to move away, to live some place else. God told him to go, and he went, trusting God to lead him even though God had not told him where he was to go.

People in those days did not have the written Word like we do. God's revelations were passed on by word of mouth until Moses came along five hundred years after Abraham had lived, and then the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis, was written. God guided in those days by direct dealings with His people in ways that are different from what He does today. When we have needs which we bring to the Lord, it is not that we trust Him to do what we want. Nor are we to try to force God's hand in doing something for us that we want Him to do by getting as many people as we can to pray with us. It is good to ask people to pray with us, and for us, but it is so we can all join together in praising the Lord when He answers prayer.

The will of God is not always clear to us. But we are to pray, casting our care upon the Lord, and trusting Him to help us, but we pray that the will of the Lord may be done. There are conditions that must be met when we pray which are mentioned in his Word. But when we pray bringing our needs to the Lord, believing that He loves us, and will be faithful to us, we trust Him to work out His will. This is living by faith.

As we come this morning to Genesis 22, we come to what surely was the greatest trial of Abraham's life. In fact, Charles Simeon, of Cambridge University history, said that no action of faith and obedience in all of Scripture equaled that of Abraham at this point, except for the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. It must strike anyone reading the Bible for the first time as an incredible command that God gave to Abraham—that he would be asked to sacrifice his own son regardless of what the purpose might be.

Let us think together, first of all, about

I. THE TIMING OF THIS REQUEST.

It is really impossible to say for sure how old Abraham, or Sarah, or Isaac was at this time. The last verse of chapter 21 tells us that Abraham lived in Beersheba, the land of the Philistines, for many days. This probably means *for several years*. When Isaac asked his father about the sacrificial animal, we can see that he was well aware that something strange was going on. That still doesn't help us with his age, but he could have been a child of 5, 6, or 7 on up into his teens. Abraham did not have any trouble binding Isaac to place him on the altar, so this would indicate that he was a very young child. But we cannot say for sure how old he was.

But we do know that this was not the first test of Abraham's faith. But it was the most severe. Even if Isaac had not been an important link in the family line which led down to Christ, it was not something easy for a father to be asked to do, not only to kill his son, but to burn his body until there was nothing but ashes left. In verse 8 the Lord told Abraham that he was to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

By this time Ishmael had been sent away with his mother, and so Isaac was all that Abraham had left. The Lord said that he knew that Isaac was his only son, and that he was greatly loved by his father, Abraham. This almost seems like pouring salt into an open wound.

What we can say is that Abraham had known the Lord many years. He had obviously been growing in the Lord. He had learned from the mistakes that he had made, but most importantly of all, he had been growing in his knowledge of God. By this time Abraham was a mature child of God, one who had been strengthened by many trials and had been brought to great faith in his God. But, as Abraham listened to the words which God somehow spoke to him, perhaps he remembered God's words to him when Sarah came to him demanding that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. God had said to him, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

So it was through Isaac and his descendants that the promised Redeemer would come. This is what made the Lord's command to Abraham so astounding! The Bible doesn't say so, but I can imagine that the thought went through Abraham's mind, if God is going to give the promised seed through Isaac, then why would God tell him to kill Isaac. From a human point of view it just did not make sense. And yet Abraham had no doubt but that God wanted him to kill Isaac. There is no evidence that he even told Sarah what God was asking him to do. We can certainly imagine what her attitude might have been. But I don't want to throw any doubt on Sarah's faith because we need to remember that as the years were rolling by, both Abraham and Sarah were growing in their knowledge of the Lord as a result of their fellowship with Him. And this is what results in a strong faith. So they both were very different at this point in their lives from what they were when they first left Ur of the Chaldees, or even when they entered the land of Canaan. If you know some Christians whom you have not seen for several years, and you are going to see them soon, *don't be surprised if you see some great changes in their lives, and I am talking about changes for the good.* The Lord never stops working in any of our lives as He makes us more and more like the Savior.

The second thing to notice is this story is:

II. ABRAHAM'S IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE.

This time the Lord told Abraham where he was to go. He was to go to the land of Moriah. No one seems to know what or where that land was, but it was a three-day journey from wherever Abraham was.

Notice that there is no record in this chapter of Abraham responding to what the Lord had told him to do. He just made immediate preparations to go. He got up early the next morning, and left. What a great example of obedience! Let the Lord delay in what He does as seems best to Him, but when He tells us what to do, as He does many places in His Word, let there be no delay in our obedience.

No comment at all is made of anything that was said until they got where Abraham knew that the Lord wanted them to be. That would have been one day that I would have hated to see coming. But that is a commentary on me, just as Abraham's willingness to go is a commentary on him.

Abraham had taken two servants with him. He told them to stay behind, and then he said two most amazing things. He told them, first of all, to stay where they were, and then he said this: "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

Notice the last words of that statement. *Would you have been thinking about worshiping the Lord if the Lord had told you to do what He had told Abraham to do?* What does it mean *to worship*? It means to humble yourself before the Lord as evidence that you love Him, and want to please Him. It meant demonstrating that the Lord is first in your life. It meant demonstrating what the Lord had been doing in Abraham's heart throughout his pilgrimage and during all of those years. Probably the Lord saw that He, the Lord, was second to Isaac, as in previous years He had been second to Ishmael. But He wants to be first in all of our hearts and in our lives. I think that this was the purpose of this time of testing.

It is one thing to say that we love the Lord, but it is another thing to have to prove it.

Do you remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. 10:37-39? Let me read them to you.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:37-39).

This does not mean that we aren't to love our fathers or mothers, or our brothers and sisters, but it does mean that we need to love the Lord most of all and first of all. And this is not to be just the expression of our lips, but demonstrated in our lives. Each of us needs to ask ourselves, "Do I pass the test?"

But what was the other expression that I wanted you to notice? It was this: Abraham said, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you. In effect, this means, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and (we will, understood) will come again unto you." But I thought that Moses and Isaac were both going to worship God, and that Isaac would be the sacrifice. How could Isaac come back if he were going to die by fire, and his body consumed?

Let's go to Hebrews 11 to get our answer to that important question. Please turn to that chapter as I read to you verses 17 through 19. This is what it says:

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,
18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:
19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Heb. 11:17-19).

Now let me ask you another question. "When you go back in your Bible from our text today, Genesis 22, to Genesis 1, how many cases do you find of people who were raised from the dead? None, not one!

Or let me ask it another way: When you go back from Genesis 22 to Genesis 1, how many kinds of people have we learned about whose bodies were completely destroyed by fire, and yet lived to come back again to their families and loved ones in their bodies? The answer is the same, isn't it?

Where did Abraham get such an idea? Well, he knew from the conception and birth of Isaac, that God was an all-powerful God, Who could set aside the natural order of human life to give parents a son who were too old to have children. That takes omnipotence.

But Abraham had learned another thing about God from the birth of Isaac, and that was that God is faithful. Now if He is faithful, and all-powerful, He can *and will* bring Isaac back to life again even though he is killed and his body is destroyed by the fire. Remember that Isaac was to be “a burnt offering”!

That is why Abraham told his two servants, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you.” Abraham fully intended to kill Isaac to show how he trusted God, but he also was fully convinced that God could put his body back together again. And perhaps this is the reason that he did not tell Sarah what God had told him to do.

Faith is laying hold of God and His Word, and then following the path of obedience whatever may come. And so God stopped the killing before Abraham could plunged his knife into Isaac’s heart.

Concl: What tremendously important lessons are in this historic event!

Abraham loved God, loved Him more than anyone else. And Abraham knew God, and was fully convinced that God was powerful, and faithful, infinite even in His love.

You know the Lord as your Savior, but do you know Him as your Friend? This is what James had to say about Abraham:

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God , and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God .

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (James 2:21-24).

It is easy to say that we love the Lord, but do we show that we love the Lord by the way we trust Him? If we live like Abraham lives, it is very clear that we cannot go wrong. The issues in our lives may be very different, but the God we know is the same God Abraham knew, and He is just the same today that He was then. Therefore, let us trust Him. He cannot fail us, and will not fail, so let us love Him and trust Him more and more.