

Ministry of Grace

Lesson 12 – A Typical Sacrifice

Genesis 22:1-24

¹After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here am I."

²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

³So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.

⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

⁶And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!"

And he said, "Here am I, my son."

He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

⁸Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. ⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

And he said, "Here am I."

¹²He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

¹⁵Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

¹⁹So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. ²⁰Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: ²¹Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, ²²Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." ²³(Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Synopsis

It was probably some fifteen to eighteen years after the birth of Isaac, that God again tested Abraham's faith. He instructed Abraham to take Isaac, the son for whom he had waited about 30 years, and sacrifice him on Mt. Moriah. Wasting no time, Abraham set out the following morning with Isaac and two servant boys to make the offering that God demanded. Once they arrived at Mt. Moriah, Abraham instructed the two servants to stay with the donkey while the two of them proceeded up to the top of the hill. As they hiked along, Isaac carried the wood for the sacrificial fire and his father had the fire (probably a specialized pouch with smoldering embers in it), but they had no animal to sacrifice. So, Isaac asked him, "Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham simply replied, "God will provide the lamb."

Arriving at the top, Abraham proceeded to build a stone altar and laid the wood on top. Then, something truly amazing happened. Abraham tied up his son and laid him on top of the wood. Why is this so amazing? Think about it. Isaac, a teenager, could easily have resisted his aged father. In other words, Isaac was willing to let his father bind him and put him on the altar. Then, as Abraham was about to slit the boy's throat, God called out to him from heaven and said, "[Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.](#)"

As Abraham put his knife back in its sheaf, he probably heard and then saw behind him, a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. So he took it and offered it on the altar instead of Isaac. God then called out from heaven a second time saying, "[By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.](#)"

Genesis 22:1, 2

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

“After these things” – There is wide dissention regarding how much time has passed since the weaning of Isaac. According to the Talmud (a written version of the Jewish Oral Traditions), it was soon afterwards, when he was about five years old. Aben Ezra (one of the most distinguished Jewish intellectuals in the Middle Ages) says Isaac was about thirteen years old. Josephus (1st century Jewish historian) and Bishop Ussher (17th century chronologer and Biblical commentator) place his age at twenty-six. The Targum of Jonathan indicates that his age was thirty-six years at the time of these events. The bottom line is that we don’t really know how old Isaac was.

However, what we can deduce from verse six of this chapter is that he was old enough to carry a sufficient amount of wood to make an animal sacrifice (burnt offering). Thus, it is likely that he was at least in his late teen years.

“tested” – Hebrew *nāsāh*, meaning “to test, to try, to prove, or to tempt.” There is no distinction in Hebrew (as there is in Greek) between a temptation to sin and a testing to strengthen. That distinction must be inferred from context. Here it is obviously a testing to strengthen. Even though Abraham was advanced in years, God was not through dealing with him and wanted to strengthen his faith and his relationship with God. Writers of the various Targumim (plural of Targum) claim that Abraham was tested ten times, with this being the tenth and most severe.

“your only son Isaac” – One might argue that Isaac was not his only son, since Ishmael was his son also. The usual argument is to claim that Isaac was the son of promise and was born to Sarah, his wife, not to a concubine, but that doesn’t sufficiently address the issue. In chapter twenty-one, we saw that Abraham cast-out Hagar and her son. In the custom of the times, this meant that she and her son legally were no longer members of Abraham’s family. In other words, Abraham divorced Hagar and disinherited Ishmael as a son. Thus, Ishmael is no longer his son, making Isaac his only son.

“Moriah” – The Hebrew word, *moriyah*, most likely means “seen by Yah” or “seen by Yahweh.” This is the same area in which Solomon’s Temple was later built in the city of Jerusalem.

Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (2 Chronicles 3:1)

Today the Dome of the Rock Mosque sits on that spot. Moriah is not a single hill, but a ridge that contains several hills, one of which is also believed to be the hill of Calvary, where Jesus Christ was crucified.

“offer him there as a burnt offering” – Not simply kill the boy, but burn him to ashes. It would be hard enough for Abraham to kill his son, to burn him to ashes would leave nothing. This was the whole concept of a burnt offering, it was so completely consumed that there was nothing left but ashes and those were indistinguishable from the wood ash.

“on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” – This is similar to Abraham’s initial call:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (Genesis 12:1)

Abraham has repeatedly shown his willingness to follow God even when he did not know or understand where he was going or what it would finally entail.

Genesis 22:3-5

So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

“Abraham rose early in the morning” – Once again we see that Abraham did not hesitate to obey God, his faith having become strong. He has already learned that God always fulfills His promises. Even though Abraham had to wait many years for the promised son to be born, and even then when Abraham was 100 years old. Now it is some fifteen to twenty years later and Abraham still believes that the Messiah will be his seed. It is possible that Abraham actually believed that Isaac **was** the Messiah.

“young men” – Why did Abraham take two servant boys with him? Was it simply to watch the donkey while Abraham and Isaac went the final distance to the top of the hill? If so, this indicates that Abraham had thought about and planned exactly what he was going to do.

“I and the boy ... will come again to you” – Do you see this! Abraham believed that both he and Isaac would return from the sacrifice. Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead! We are also told this fact in the book of Hebrews:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." **He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead**, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. (**Hebrews 11:17-19**)

Genesis 22:6-8a

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."

“laid it on Isaac his son” – The amount of wood needed for a burnt offering could have weighed seventy-five pounds or more. The fact that Isaac carried it indicates that he had reached an age with sufficient strength to do so, probably his late teen years.

“where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” – Clearly, Isaac was not yet aware that he was to be the offering.

“God will provide for himself the lamb” – Literally, “Elohim will see for Himself the lamb.”

“lamb” – Hebrew *seh*, meaning “one of a flock of smaller animals, as a goat or a sheep”

Genesis 22:8b, 9

So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

“Abraham built the altar” – Throughout his years in the land of Canaan, Abraham had become accomplished at building altars. He had built an altar at Schechem (**Genesis 12:7**), he built an altar between Bethel and Ai (**Genesis 12:8**), he repaired the altar between Bethel and Ai (**Genesis 13:4**), he build an altar at the oak grove of Mamre, which is Hebron (**Genesis 13:18**), and he built this altar on Mt. Moriah.

“Abraham ... bound Isaac his son” – If Isaac was strong enough to carry the wood for the sacrifice and Abraham was more than 100 years old (probably between 115 and 120), it is reasonable to assume that Isaac was willing to be tied-up. He could easily have run from his aged father or resisted by force being tied-up, but apparently he did neither.

In order for this to be a complete “type” of the offering of the Lamb of God, not only did the father (Abraham/God) have to willingly offer the son, but the son (Isaac/Jesus) had to willingly give himself to be sacrificed. This event not only lets us see a picture of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, it also lets us see the love and obedience of God the Father and God the Son at the cross of Calvary. Jesus was willing to go through agonizing torture out of obedience and love and the Father was willing to allow His Son to die a torturous death to demonstrate His love for fallen mankind.

Genesis 22:10-12

Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

“took the knife to slaughter his son” – This would not be a knife raised over his head to stab, but a knife laid to the neck in preparation for slicing it open.

“the angel of the LORD” – Not a created angel, but Jesus Christ pre-incarnate.

“Abraham, Abraham” – This is the first of ten name duplications that appear in the Bible. Seven of them are God speaking to individuals:

Abraham, Abraham – **Genesis 22:11**

Jacob, Jacob – **Genesis 46:2**

Moses, Moses – **Exodus 3:4**

Samuel, Samuel – **1Samuel, 3:10**

Martha, Martha – **Luke 10:41**

Simon, Simon – **Luke 22:31**

Saul, Saul – **Acts 9:4**

The other three are:

Lord, Lord – **Matthew 7:21, 22**

Jerusalem, Jerusalem – **Matthew 23:37**

Eloi, Eloi – **Mark 15:34**

“now I know that you fear God” – Didn’t God already know that Abraham feared Him and was willing to do whatever was asked of him? Yes. This is not a knowledge of awareness that Abraham feared him, because God knows all things before they are done. This is a judicial knowledge. In order for Abraham to be judged obedient, he had to demonstrate his obedience.

In the book of James, this act of obedience is used to demonstrate that faith without works is dead, but by works faith is made complete. In other words, good works (obedience to God) are the evidence of salvation, not the method of salvation.

Genesis 22:13, 14

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

“**lifted his eyes and looked**” – This does not mean that the Ram was at a higher elevation than Abraham. We see the same exact expression applied to Lot when he looked DOWN on the Jordan valley:

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD ... (Genesis 13:10a)

“**ram**” – Hebrew *‘ayil*, meaning “strength.” It is the word used of a political chief, a ram (because of his great strength), a strong tree (like an oak), or a strong man. This is clearly a different word than *seh* (lamb), which we saw back in verse eight. Thus, this is not the “lamb” that Abraham was talking about back in verse eight. Although God did provide this ram for the offering, He later provided the “Lamb of God” as the sacrifice for us all.

“**The-LORD- will provide**” – Yahweh-Jireh, which means “Yahweh will see for Himself” or “Yahweh will provide.”

“**In the mount of the LORD it shall be provided**” – or literally, “in Yahweh’s mountain it (or He) shall be seen.” This prophetic declaration not only speaks of a time when God’s temple and His Shekinah glory will be seen here, but to the fact that on this hill (the temple mount) Emmanuel will be seen in the flesh, and on this mount (Calvary) God’s Lamb will be seen as a sacrifice for us all (God will be seen and God will provide.)

Among the Jewish people this saying, “in the mount of Yahweh, He will see” or “in the mount of Yahweh, he will provide,” has served as a reminder that no matter how desperate the situation, when things are at their worst, God will see and will provide what is needed.

Genesis 22:15-18

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

“By Myself I have sworn” – According to the writer of Hebrews, He swore by Himself because there was nothing greater by which He could make this promise:

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, (Hebrews 6:13)

This verse confirms what we have said previously, that the Angel of Yahweh, is none other than Yahweh Himself (in the form of the pre-incarnate Son of God).

“your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies” – This is a prophetic statement which will not be fulfilled completely until the Millennial reign of Christ.

Genesis 22:19-24

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

And Abraham lived at Beersheba - It appears from the end of Genesis chapter 21 that Abraham made his dwelling place in Beersheba because after his covenant with Abimelech and his purchase of the well, Abraham planted a tamarisk tree and he called on the name of Yahweh.

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. (Genesis 21:33)

Milcah also has borne children ... - These verses are probably given to identify the lineage of Rebekah (Isaac’s wife).

A Typical Sacrifice

This chapter is one of the mountain peaks of the Old Testament. Not only is it a test (and demonstration) of Abraham’s faith, but it is a type of Jesus’ death on the cross. Just as Abraham was willing to give his only son as a sacrifice, God was willing to give his only son to die on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. And, just as Isaac was willing to be sacrificed by his father Abraham, so Jesus was willing to give himself to die the slow and painful death on the cross. Remember Jesus’ words in the Garden, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." Isaac submitted to his father’s will just as Jesus submitted to his Father’s will.

In fact, there are a number of things that indicate that the offering of Isaac was a “type” of the offering of Jesus. Notice the similarity between these two events:

Isaac	Christ
This transaction is between a father (Abraham) and his son (Isaac).	At the cross, the transaction was between God the Father and God the Son.
Isaac was the “promised son” for whom Abraham waited many years.	Messiah is the promised redeemer for whom the Israelites waited many years.
Isaac was miraculously conceived – of a woman	Christ was miraculously conceived – of a

past child bearing years.	virgin.
Isaac's presence caused jealousy in his brother.	Christ's presence caused jealousy among the religious leaders of His time.
Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice.	Christ carried his own cross.
Abraham built the altar to sacrifice his son.	God made the tree to which His son was nailed.
Isaac was offered up by his father.	Christ was offered up by God the Father.
Isaac was innocent (i.e. He was not being punished).	Christ was innocent (and declared so by Pontius Pilate).
Isaac was obedient, willing to be sacrificed.	Christ was obedient, willing to be sacrificed.
Isaac was offered on a hill in Moriah.	Calgary is a hill in Moriah (the Temple mount is part of the same ridge).
Isaac was given back to Abraham on the third day of his journey.	Christ was resurrected on the third day.

Building Relationships

In this lesson we learn a lot more about the relationship that our God wants to have with us. If you're like me, you always get a little excited when God answers a prayer, especially if it's one that you have been praying for a long time (years, perhaps). Once God answers your prayer, however, you move on to the next situation/need and begin praying for that one. But that's not the way God works. Remember, God wants us to have a relationship with him, a father/son or father/daughter relationship, not a genie in a bottle relationship. The real value of prayer is not in the answer itself, but in the spiritual qualities and relationship that the trials produce in us. Once we see an answer to prayer, God will often use the answer, or the process of getting you there, to take your relationship with him to the next level.

My earthly father was not a Christian, but he constantly demonstrated to me how to love others. He would bend over backwards to help others and he would never intentionally do anything to harm anyone. He didn't drink, he didn't smoke, and he didn't swear, but he also didn't pray because he didn't believe in his need for God. He taught me how to build things and how to fix things. He taught me how to take care of myself without depending on others for help or support. In fact, as I was growing up, if I was in a difficult situation, I never asked him for help because I knew that he expected me to take care of it myself. As a result, I never developed much of a relationship with my father. Oh, I knew he loved me and I knew that he loved my mother because he was always doing things for my mother and for our family. I suppose that for someone who only has this earthly life to live for, that was a good way to live. As Christians, however, this earthly life is only a brief audition for our eternal life with our God.

Our heavenly father is different. Oh, he loves us, for sure, more than our earthly parents ever could. Our heavenly father doesn't expect us to "go it alone." He wants us to call on him. He wants us to talk to him, daily, hourly, minute by minute. He wants us to have a relationship with him. Did you ever wonder why our God allows hardships to come into our lives? Sure, sometimes it's to chasten us for wandering off without him and getting into things we shouldn't get into. But, what happens when we encounter these hardships? Even the most stubborn of us (like me) eventually realizes that we need to pray. We talk to our heavenly father. We confess our "me" motives and our sinful actions. We humble ourselves before him and ask for his help. And, when things are going wonderful, what do we do? Well, I don't know about you, but when things are going great in my life I tend to forget

about God and just enjoy the peace and tranquility. So, if God wants to have a relationship with us and we only talk to him when we are in need of his help ... you can fill in the blank!

Another thing to notice is that during good times we don't learn very much. But during our times of turbulence in life, we learn to rely on God, we learn to listen to God, we learn to trust in his promises, and we learn to humble ourselves before him. Not only does God want a relationship with us, he wants us to grow and mature in our relationship. Growth and maturity only come through difficult times.

In Matthew's gospel he records Jesus' teachings that we refer to as the Sermon on the Mount. In it, among many other noteworthy lessons, he taught the following:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

For Christians, the problems and trials of this life mold us and shape us, not just for this life, but for eternity as well. Once we pass through the doorway from this life into eternity with God, the problems and trials will be over. We tend to look at this as a good thing, but consider this: once our earthly life is over, there will be no more opportunities for God to make us more like his son. True, we will not have a sin nature in heaven, but it also does not appear that we will all be identical copies of each other, either physically, spiritually, or relationally. The way that we handle trials in this lifetime and the way God answers our prayers will have eternal consequences. I think that's part of the reason that James taught us:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Likewise, the relationship that we develop with God in this lifetime is the relationship that we will take into eternity with us.

Because I never learned to ask my earthly father for help, it has been a struggle for me to ask my heavenly father for help. As a result, God has put me in some really difficult situations both financially and physically where I can't help myself. I have to ask him.

I wish I was a lot more like Abraham. He never seems to have had difficulty hearing God speak to him. Let's face it; if God spoke audibly to us today the way he did to Abraham, once we got over the shock, we'd all hear him more clearly. And, when God spoke to Abraham and gave him instructions on what to do, Abraham rarely hesitated.

The Testing of Abraham's Faith

Now, let's put our sanctified imagination to work again so that we can speculate what Abraham and Isaac might have gone through. -- It's been perhaps seventeen years since Isaac was born and life has moved along smoothly for Abraham and Sarah. The days of famine are past and he has learned how to live in the midst of unbelievers without fighting or lying. I'm sure that Abraham felt a special warmth in his heart as he saw Isaac progress from an infant, to a young boy, to a pre-teen, and now to a teenager filling out with muscle. As for Isaac, if he was anything like we were as teenagers; he probably struggled with his own identity as a person. Abraham likely gave Isaac more and more

responsibility at home and with the flocks and herds, although Isaac surely resented doing the menial tasks, expecting to be given the more glamorous responsibilities. After all, he was Abraham's son! It also appears that Abraham had taught him the importance of obedience to his father and to their God.

Abraham may have looked at his son from a distance and thought, *Yahweh has kept his promise and has given me a son. I am so blessed!* It was perhaps even as he was thanking Yahweh for Isaac that he heard the Almighty speak to him. "Abraham! Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

"I'm sorry, Lord, I must have misunderstood what you said. I thought you said to offer Isaac as a sacrifice."

"Yes, that's exactly what I asked you to do. You had enough faith to believe that I would give Isaac to you in the first place. Do you have enough faith to now lay him on the altar, kill him, and burn him to ashes?"

I wonder how long Abraham had to think about Yahweh's command before he resolved to do exactly as he was told. Personally, I would have tossed and turned most of the night before realizing that since Yahweh had kept his promise to answer Abraham's prayer for a son, he surely could raise him from the dead, even after being burnt to ashes. After all, this was the promised son and Yahweh had already said that the Messiah would come through him.

The next morning, Isaac's father approached him saying, "Isaac, Yahweh has spoken to me and wants me to give him a sacrificial offering on a hill of Moriah. I want you to go with me."

Taking a couple of the servant boys with them, they headed northeast past their former homestead at the oaks of Mamre, all the way up to the top of the mountains. There before them was Mt. Moriah just as Yahweh had revealed it to him. Then, leaving the donkey with the servant boys, Abraham loaded the firewood into Isaac's arms and headed the rest of the way up the mountain. Turning to the servant boys he said something like this, "You two wait here with the donkey. Isaac and I will go up and offer the sacrifice and then we will return to you here."

As they were hiking up the hill, they had a conversation that perhaps sounded something like this: "Father, we have the wood and the fire, but we don't have a lamb for the offering. Where are we going to get a lamb?"

To which Abraham replied, "Don't worry, my son, Yahweh will provide the lamb for his sacrifice."

Reaching the summit, Isaac dropped the wood and helped his father build an altar from the stones that were there. Once the altar was complete, Abram turned to Isaac and said, "Isaac, my son, my only son. I love you with all my heart and I waited nearly 30 years for you to be born. Yahweh has always kept his promises and he has said that through you nations will be born and the Messiah will be one of your descendants. However, now Yahweh has instructed me to offer you on the altar. I must do as he commands. I know that he will keep his promises, so he will surely bring you back from the dead and give you a long life."

"Father, Yahweh has always kept his promises. He has never failed us. I believe he will raise me from the dead if you kill me here. I willingly give myself to be Yahweh's sacrifice."

Without resisting, Isaac allowed himself to be bound with the ropes and laid himself on the wood. But, before Abraham could do him any harm, they heard Yahweh's voice from heaven saying: "Do

not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

There behind him, Abraham saw a ram caught by the horns in the middle of the bushes. Untying Isaac, he and his son captured the ram and offered him up on the altar.

As they headed back down the mountain, Isaac may have said, “Father, you said that Yahweh would provide a lamb for his sacrifice. But, even I know that what we sacrificed was a full grown ram, not a lamb.”

“Yes, my son, Yahweh will provide for himself a sacrificial lamb. You can be sure of that!”

I think I know a little bit about how Abraham felt when he was told to sacrifice his son. God spoke to me the other day. Not audibly, like he did with Abraham, but I know it was God. I’m in a partnership with my older son. We own a business together and two of our employees are my other son and one of my daughters. The business has been barely getting by for the last year or so, largely due to bureaucratic decisions both at the state and the federal level. This morning, God spoke to my heart that it is time to close the business, which means putting several of my children out of work and reducing my income by about half. Since I’m in the middle of writing this chapter in the life of Abraham, I couldn’t ignore it. I knew I would have to have a serious conversation with my older son and then find a way to break the news to my younger son and my daughter.

Shortly after I arrived at work, my older son came into the cubicle where my younger son and I work and said, “I think we need to talk about where this company is going.” It quickly became apparent that we both believed that at the end of our current warehouse lease, we should close the company. Not only did God make it clear to both of us what he wanted us to do, but he did it in a way that allowed my younger son to understand our reasoning. Later that evening I had the necessary conversation with my daughter. Now there are four of us who need to find a new source of income in two months. I keep thinking about what Abraham said to Isaac, “God will provide a lamb for himself.”

So What?

Have you been struggling with God lately? Are you going through trials that are testing the fabric of your faith? Remember, God wants a relationship with you. If you never have to ask for help, then you don’t need God. If life is always easy, you won’t develop a relationship with him. And, if God answers all your prayers immediately, how can your faith grow? Keep in mind what James taught us:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

God is in the business of making his children more like Jesus Christ. When we go through the struggles in life, let’s keep in mind that it is during these times that he is strengthening our faith and he is building our relationship with him. One day, when we’re in his presence, we can say, “Thank you, Lord, for the trials that you brought in my life. I now see why you did it!”

And, hopefully, he will respond, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

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