

Studies in Faith: The Depth Of Abraham's

Before we start our study of Abraham's trial and faith. I want to back up. In a prior sermon, it was pointed out to me, which I appreciate, I used a word that is not very common and I did not explain it. In **1 John 2:2**, the apostle writes, "**He (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**" The word propitiation is found in only in 3 other verses. The context of the verse in 1 John gives us a clue to this word's meaning, but let me more specific.

Propitiation – means *the turning away of anger by the offering of a gift*. The idea that God cannot be angry is not based on the Old or New Testament. God does have anger for the sins of the human race. Whenever His children sin, they provoke the anger of God. Of course, His anger is not an irrational lack of self-control, as it so often is with humans. His anger is the settled opposition of His holy nature to everything that is evil. Such opposition to sin cannot be dismissed. As the Bible states it was only by the cross that God's anger was abated against those who believe, as we observe in 1 John 2:2. This is not the only way of looking at the cross, but it is an important way. If God's anger is real, then it must be taken into account in the way that sin, which caused that wrath, is dealt with. When the N.T. speaks of "propitiation," it means that *Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of mankind put away God's wrath against His people once and for all*.

Pray

Amazing Faith

Now we will move on to this morning's scripture study. So far through chapter 11 of Hebrews we have witnessed events of one-time acts of faith as seen of Abel. We have witnessed long durations of faith in how Enoch walked with God throughout his life and Noah built the Ark over many years. We saw the beginning of Abraham's faith as God called him from Ur and gave him the gift of faith. Now, like Enoch and Noah we are going to look at the depth of Abraham's faith. When Peter walked on water and suddenly began to sink, "Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him (*Peter*), saying to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (Matthew 14:31) The phrase, "O' you of little faith" does not apply to Abraham in this text we are going to study. However, the phrase *O' you of amazing faith* does apply.

The human need addressed in these verses is that believers are to exercise faith when the cost is high and our understanding of what God is doing is low.

Because of our fallen and sinful nature, we learn obedience by the experiences where we suffer by the loving and ordained divine hand of God. We observe this in Hebrews 5, verses 7 to 8, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." Just as Jesus suffered in His mortal body by faith, so too, this was true of Abraham and should be true of us.

As Brother Dale read the Genesis account earlier – it is a great blessing to have the narrative account preserved for us. In Hebrews we get a more in-depth picture as to what was going on in Abraham's mind during this trial God placed before him.

I want to bring our focus to verse 2 of the Genesis account in chapter 22 and point out a couple of things that will help us understand the Hebrews account. Reading verse 2, “He (*God*) 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.’”

We need to understand that Genesis as well as the rest of Scripture has as its ultimate focus the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to approach this text in the way it must be approached if we are going to grasp the true intent of God. First, this is a real historical account. Abraham, “**bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar**”. (Genesis 22:9) This is an historical event that took place in time and space. Second, this real account serves as a parable that points ultimately from God the Father to God the Son at Calvary.

When we ask questions like, “Why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son”? It should immediately cause us to think why would God sacrifice His only Son? The phrasing Genesis chapter 22 points unmistakably to Jesus. It says that Abraham took his only son Isaac, however, Abraham also had another son, Ishmael. Moses, the writer of Genesis recorded God’s Words, but we ask, wait a minute, Abraham had two sons. I believe Moses knew what was going on. Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Sarah’s disobedience. Abraham only had one son of promise, Isaac.

Second, the place where this act of sacrifice was to happen was the “**land of Moriah**” (in Hebrew **Moriah** means “**chosen by Jehovah**”). The area of Mount Moriah was a special place chosen by God and this is same mount area on which the only Begotten Son of God would be sacrificed. Mount Moriah is the area where David bought the threshing floor. David’s son Solomon would build the first

temple to God on the “[land of Moriah](#)”. Solomon’s temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and restored after the Jews were freed from Babylonian captivity. King Herod later remodeled the structure. This second temple, however, was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Some scholars believe the Mount Moriah area was where God created Adam. So, the area of Mount Moriah, Golgotha or Calvary and the adjacent city of David are all in the “[land of Moriah](#)”.

This information is recorded for a specific purpose. This account in Genesis is intended to rocket us through centuries to the death of Jesus. It is vital for our understanding that we see this account from the vantage point of Calvary. As I read verses 13 and 14 of Genesis 22 think of Calvary, think of the cross and Christ. “[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.](#) ¹⁴ [So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide’ \(yahweh yir’eh\); as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’](#)” On that same mountain, came provision. Isaac experienced God’s grace. Rather than Isaac’s death there was a death of a substitute. Rather than Isaac’s blood being required, God provided the blood of a sacrificial animal to cover Isaac. Key in on the phrase in verse 14, “[On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.](#)” Abraham experienced the blessing of the provision of God. Why do you think the Mount was not called “On the mount of the Lord **it was** provided”? Because the eternal sacrifice, the true and final sacrifice was yet to come. The Messiah shall come and save His people. Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

Testing Of Faith (v. 17)

God desires His children to spiritually mature. Here God confronts us with the faith of Abraham and the image of Christ that gave His life for our salvation.

Reading verse 17, “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...” My beloved, God is showing us through Abraham that while we journey this earth, we will experience trials and they are meant to strengthen our faith. Some trials are minor as when Abraham said Sarah was his sister and the outcome is resolved. Other trials shake one to the very foundation of faith; God tells Abraham sacrifice your only son. Through these trials God’s chosen are to endure by faith with the purpose to continually mold us more and more into the image of Christ and create in us an ever-deeper love for the Lord.

The apostle James knew and experienced trials as the leader of the Jerusalem church that was under constant persecution by the Jewish leaders. He died as a martyr by stoning at the order of the High Priest around 62 AD. James wrote to the Jerusalem believers in the midst of this persecution, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4) Trials with the molding of believers into the image of Christ.

The apostle Peter, who denied Christ and after repenting became one of the strongest moving forces of the Gospel and the growth of the early church. Who by church tradition is thought to have been crucified upside-down in Rome by order of Emperor Nero in 68 AD. Peter experienced and understood trials and wrote to believers, “who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the

revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:5-7) My beloved, when we endure trials, it is our faith that is shaken or strengthened. It is our faith that is dropped into the refiner’s fire and heated to the point of melting only to come out more purified. It is our faith that is all but crushed. God gave us His words in scripture to teach and encourage us by knowing we like so many before will experience trials. God tested Abraham’s faith do you think you are exempt?

Abraham Was Commanded To Give Up Isaac

Abraham the father of the promised son that would be the beginning of nations was commanded by God to sacrifice his son. This act alone was a heart wrenching command by God. Abraham gathered the wood and the two servants to help. By faith Abraham immediately put everything in motion to bring this commandment of God to pass. Abraham was the one who would wield the knife and thrust it into his son. He alone is the one who would do the killing. This would not be some accident but a deliberate act by Abraham. Only because he was stopped by the angel did Isaac live.

Years later on that same mountain bound by sinful men another “only Son” would be escorted up the hill. This time though - there would be no angel to save this Son. The Father knew that there would only be one way to save sinners. God the Son went up the mountain and there the greatest act of love was accomplished. Jesus went willingly to fulfill His mission. At the time Moses wrote of this trial it was noted, “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.’” (Genesis 22:14) Moses knew it was “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.” It shall be – in the future, Moses was writing of the Messiah.

From before creation the Triune God had put forth what John would write when he recorded the words of Christ, ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:16-18) These are the words of the Triune God set into motion before the creation of the universe.

So, you understand the relationship between Abraham’s heartrending decision to part with his son is a fitting parable of God’s great love for a lost world. Let me ask, who was it that required the death of Jesus the Son? It was not the Romans or the Jews even though they desired Jesus dead. It was decision of God the Father. The death of Jesus was a decreed death. It was a divine plan. It was God’s justice that required that sin be paid for. The payment was certainly not made to Satan. It was God’s justice that required the payment be made for sin.

Satan is sin and Paul made clear Jesus’ sacrificial death was required by God and for the salvation of God’s chosen and had nothing to do with the evil one. Paul pleads with fellow believers writing, “We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20-21) God’s plan of salvation came before creation and God knew Adam and Eve would sin, just like we do because we are self-centered and self-serving and fallen. The prophet Isaiah understood this, writing, ⁵“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of

us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6) A few verses later the prophet writes, “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” (Isaiah 53:10) Again the prophet is speaking of God’s pre-creation plan. God’s plan was before the universe came into existence, God’s plan was launched before Adam and Eve ever sinned and before you were existent, Paul writes, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” (Romans 5:8-9) People are saved from the anger and wrath of God against sin by the sacrificial death of Christ and His resurrection from the dead. Abraham proved faithful, but Jesus, the only perfect One was perfectly faithful.

Counted As Righteousness (v. 18)

Abraham has a dilemma; in Hebrews 11:18, which is taken from Genesis 21:12, it says, “of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’” As we think through this command of God, namely to sacrifice Isaac, we come up against a major problem. If Isaac dies God’s Word cannot be trusted. If Abraham kills Isaac, then the covenant dies along with him.

It was through this son, the son of promise, remember back in chapter 15 of Genesis when God told Abraham his servant would not be his heir, God said to Abraham, “‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’” Then in the next verse it was by Abraham’s faith God says,⁶ “And he (*Abraham*) believed the LORD, and he (*the LORD*) counted it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:5-6) By faith Abraham believed. Yet, we have a dilemma, just a few years later God tells Abraham he

must sacrifice his son. God calls Abraham to obey even though things do not seem to make sense. So, again the theme of these verses is as God's chosen people we are to live by faith even if the cost is high and our understanding is low.

If I can step into Abraham's mind for a minute here is what I perceive. God said that my offspring would build His nations and all this would come through this child of promise. God told me the world would be blessed through this child and from this child would come the Messiah. But now God says kill this son of promise as a sacrifice to Him and trust He will provide. I have no children to replace Isaac – how will God bring His promises about? Was is not the LORD that told me, “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.**” (Genesis 17:19) This is not making sense; how can this happen if Isaac is dead? Like Abraham came to realize, we too must accept; when God commands something, one must always remember that even if it does not make sense, He has something in mind and we do not fully understand the plans of God. My beloved. obey what you know to be true. Obey what is consistent with what is found in Scripture. Always obey even if it does not all make sense. Yet, know if it is from God, it will be consistent with the Bible. God's blessing is often the supernatural variable in the equation that makes it work in the end.

Faith For The Outcome (v. 19)

For Abraham who saw into the future the Messiah and for us as we look back and see the Messiah, we instantly know God can do anything by the resurrection of His Son. This is what Abraham was able to understand by faith. Reading verse 19, “**He (Abraham) considered that God was able even to raise him (Isaac) from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him**

back.” The resurrection is the supernatural work of God and Abraham understood God could raise Isaac and this was a foreshadow of Christ. Again, as I try to peer into the mind of Abraham; I can see him thinking, God must be going to raise Isaac up from the dead in order to accomplish all His promises He has made through him. Abraham moves forward in obedience – can you imagine? Just as he prepares to plunge the knife - God commands the angel and he shouts from heaven and stops Abraham. As Abraham looks up and his gaze is taken to the nearby thicket and sees a substitute. It may have been at this time when faith and trust and obedience came together that prompted Jesus to say to the gathered Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56) So we have come to understand Abraham lived his faith, ⁶“And he (*Abraham*) believed the LORD, and he (*the LORD*) counted it to him as righteousness.” What will God count of your life? If we live by faith, as Paul wrote, we know, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Like Abraham if we live by faith we will be counted among the righteous.

Abraham looked death in the eye and his belief in God remained. Either God would stop the knife from killing Isaac or God would raise Isaac from the dead. These were the only two possible answers. God prevented Abraham from killing his only son, Isaac. When it came to God’s only Son Jesus Christ there was no cry from the angel to stop the event. To pay for the sins of His people Jesus went to the cross. He suffered, bled and died so the penalty for sin would be paid. God’s justice was satisfied when Christ died. The solution to this dilemma much like the dilemma concerning Abraham and Isaac was a resurrection.

Twofold Resurrection (v. 19)

The symbolic resurrection or the giving back of Isaac pointed to the future true resurrection of Jesus. Reading verse 19, “He (*Abraham*) considered that God was able even to raise him (*Isaac*) from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.” Abraham and Isaac’s trial showed both acted by faith. They showed true faith and pointed to Jesus’ physical sacrifice and resurrection. In Paul’s letter to the believers in Corinth we read, ²⁰ “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) Christ’s resurrection insures our resurrection. The apostle Peter made clear, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3) God the Father and God the Son agreed that the Son’s death was required to completely release God’s children from the bondage of sin. When that death occurred, full payment was made. Jesus rose from the death. Through this we know that in the same way that Christ was raised, so too, we as God’s people, will rise.

Abraham’s deeply rooted faith provided for us a picture of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the death and resurrection of Christ we are given faith and eternal hope. So, we are to live by faith when the cost is high and our understanding is low. My beloved, know this, by the trials in life God deepens and grows our faith. Amen!