

## Abraham and Isaac

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Abraham was 75 years old when God promised him a son. When he was 99, he was still waiting for that son. Finally, when he was 100, God kept His promise and Isaac was born. It is now 15-20 years later. Abraham had continued to live as a man of God. He worshipped the Lord. He told others what God had done for him in providing a son in his old age. And he loved his son. He was experiencing the joys of fatherhood and watching his son grow and mature. The bond between father and son was a strong one, especially since he had waited so long for him.

***Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. <sup>2</sup> Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."***

That is what God asked of Abraham. God was putting him to the test. "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and sacrifice him to me." Why would God ask such a thing? It may be that Abraham's love for his son was beginning to rival his love for God. God is supposed to have first place in our lives, and perhaps Isaac was occupying that spot in the heart of his father. So God puts him to the test. "That son I promised you? Kill him. Sacrifice him to Me." How would you react to that? How did Abraham respond?

***<sup>3</sup> Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ● <sup>5</sup> He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."***

When God tests his saints, it is pass or fail. The purpose of any test God gives us is that we might pass and receive His blessings. Abraham's response to this test is almost unbelievable. Without hesitation or question, the very next day he goes to carry out this awful command of God: sacrifice your son. He gathered the wood and made what was about a 50-mile journey to carry out God's demand. I marvel at a faith like this. What kind of man was he to trust so completely in God?

***<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, <sup>7</sup> Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. ● "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. ●***

It is here that we see the reason Abraham was able to respond as he did: faith. Abraham believed that God would provide, and God would indeed provide. Even when his dearly loved son asks that heartbreaking question, “where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham believed that God would provide. Abraham knew from experience that God kept his promises, and his faith told him that would be the case here as well.

***<sup>9</sup> When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ●***

What was going through Abraham’s mind now?

1. He must have realized that God was testing him, causing him to **choose who would be first** in his life: God or Isaac.
2. He must have been **convicted of his sin**, feeling remorse at not letting God be in first place, and hoping for God’s mercy as he carried out God’s command.
3. He had to be wondering how God’s promise of descendants fit into all of this. If he killed the child of promise, **where would the descendants** come from? Yet even if he thought this, he pushed those thoughts aside in order to do as God directed.
4. He had to be **trusting in God’s goodness**. Having known God’s love and blessing, he was empowered to carry out God’s order.
5. So he took the knife in his hand. He was ready and willing to go through with it. In his heart and mind, **he had already sacrificed Isaac**.

***<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. <sup>12</sup> “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” ●***

Abraham’s faith proved genuine. His confidence in God was so certain that he was going to slay his son. It was not an act of despair, not blind obedience, but faith. Because he was willing to sacrifice his son, because he demonstrated that God was indeed the most important thing in his life, Isaac was spared. And Abraham’s faith gives us an example. It was described this way in the New Testament.

***Hebrews 11:17-19 (NIV) <sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.***

Abraham's faith had grown to the point that he knew God would keep His promises, even if God had to raise Isaac from the dead to do so. That was seen in what Abraham said to the servant earlier: *"Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."* Abraham was completely willing to kill his son, yet put his confidence in God to keep his promises. He was confident Isaac would return with him.

***<sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."***

Abraham's earlier statement to Isaac is fulfilled: *The Lord will provide the sacrifice*. Miraculous relief was given to Abraham and his dearly loved son. Abraham sacrificed Isaac in his heart, so God provided a substitute physical sacrifice. And then God once again makes His covenant with Abraham.

***<sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time <sup>16</sup> and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars ● in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."***

You and I look at this story and see so much more of God's plan than what was apparent to father Abraham. Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son. But it was the sacrifice of the only-begotten Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased, that was the central ingredient in the fulfillment of God's promise. When God re-spoke His promise to Abraham, He reiterated, *"through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."* The offspring of Abraham that would bless all people was Jesus Christ. It was the perfect obedience of Jesus, far exceeding the obedience of Abraham, that would make Him the acceptable payment for the sins of the world. His willing and absolute submission to His Father's will, even to the point of death, secured our forgiveness.

Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only-begotten son, an act which God the Father would carry out some 20 centuries later. As Isaac struggled up the mountainside, carrying the wood for the fire, he asked, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham's answer was accurate and true, not just for that day, but for us living now as well. **God has indeed provided the lamb for the**

**offering.** God provided a substitute for Isaac, and God has provided a substitute for each of us in the person of Jesus Christ.

***Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

Those of us living 20 centuries after the sacrifice of Jesus need to ask God for faith like Abraham's, faith that believes God's promises, faith that puts all your confidence in the one who died and rose again for you.

One more thing I'd like you to consider today. I asked earlier how you would react if God asked you to give up your "Isaac," whatever that may be. I'm not just talking about giving up a child now. I'm talking about giving up whatever it is in your life that threatens to push God out of first place. It is different for each of us, but all of you have at least one such thing. Are you able to put your trust in God in order to give up that thing?

***Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?***

Consider all that God has showered upon you in your life. It all comes from Him. And then, following the example of Abraham's obedience, ask yourself, "What should I give up?"