

Sacrificial Abraham

Introduction

In the Bible, God has given us dramatic accounts of how He transformed the lives of ordinary people. People who face the same struggles that we face today: immoral culture, sexual temptation, wealth and status, sin and guilt, peer pressure, pluralistic belief, worry and fear.

In this series, we are studying people who will challenge us to do something great for God. Our final studies will end with the perfect man. The best qualities we find in these men we will be studying are perfectly found in Jesus.

Today are looking at Abraham and the sacrifices he made.

Sacrifice is very much honoured in our society. The sacrifices made by our emergency services, our armed forces, by citizens who give themselves to serve in various roles. One of the huge sacrifices made recently were by 343 of the fireman and paramedics of the New York Fire Department in trying to rescue those trapped in the Twin Towers of the New York Trade Centre on 9/11. Today if you visit Ground Zero visitors can see the pictures of those men. Such sacrifice is an expression of commitment and love.

God Himself gave the greatest expression of His love for us in self-sacrifice. He appreciates our expression of love

Sacrificial Abraham

for Him in self-sacrifice. This is how we worship God. Romans 12:1 says *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.* One of the greatest sacrifices made in the OT was that of Abraham's sacrifice.

The account of Abraham started in Chapter 12 with the command **go** to a land that God would show him. Go from this land and go on a journey to a new land.

In Genesis 22:1-2 *Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. ² Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.'* he is told to **go** to Moriah to sacrifice what was most precious to him – his promised son.

Christian faith is fundamentally about obeying God's command to leave this world for a life in the kingdom of God, and to be ready to sacrifice anything for Him as we go.

As readers of this story we are told something, which Abraham was not told. This was not a command for child sacrifice but a test of Abraham's faith. The devil tests our faith in God's Word to try to get us to abandon it, the Lord

Sacrificial Abraham

only tests our faith in His Word to purify it and to strengthen it as gold is refined in a furnace. Sometimes what God asks us to do may be perplexing and extremely costly. Illustration -Terry and Judy. Like Abraham we must learnt to trust Him.

Mount Moriah is the hill where Jerusalem is built on and where the temple would be built. The provision of the substitutionary sacrifice for Isaac foreshadows not only the animal sacrifices of the temple, but also the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The journey up the hill pointed to Christ's ascent to His cross, not carrying firewood but a cross.

The provision of a sheep for sacrifice pointed to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice who swapped places with us to suffer the penalty for us.

We are going to look at three particular aspects of Abraham's faith to which the New Testament draws attention.

Abraham believed that God could raise the dead!
*Genesis 22:3-5 **Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded 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***

Sacrificial Abraham

had told him about. ⁴ *On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.* ⁵ *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 Abraham said to His servants *we will worship and then we will come back to you* he had realized that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead in order to keep His promise about Isaac’s descendants.

Hebrews 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,* ¹⁸ *even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’* ¹⁹ *Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

Abraham believed, that God would raise the dead. This is the faith required of all Christians. We all believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead and that He will do the same for us. Abraham came to this conclusion without the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. This is why Christians are prepared to die for Christ. **This is normal Christian faith.** As Christians we are to contend for the faith, knowing that even if we must sacrifice our lives, God will raise us to life with Him. We believe, that by faith in Jesus, all believers

Sacrificial Abraham

share in His Resurrection from the dead. We have already been judged, justified, and accepted into heaven, in our representative Jesus, who now is at the right hand of the Father.

Abraham demonstrated that faith. The most remarkable aspect of Abraham's faith was the sacrifice he was willing to make.

Abraham obeyed God at great cost! Genesis 22:6-12 *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, ⁷Isaac 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?' ⁸Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together. ⁹When 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. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. ¹²'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God,*

Sacrificial Abraham

because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'

The New Testament commends Abraham for faith that was ready to obey God's Word sacrificially.

James 2:21-23 *Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend.* Faith is expressed and completed in deeds especially when they are costly. Abraham didn't just claim to have faith, or sing about his faith, he obeyed in faith at great cost to himself and to those he loved, so he was regarded by God as His friend. *Abraham's faith meant he was prepared to commit his wife and his son to this sacrifice as well.*

As Christian men we must commit not only ourselves but also our families to making sacrifices for following Jesus. We might not take that better paid job that takes more hours so we can still stay involved in Church life, we may not then be able to go on better holidays, and a buy a better house. We may give sacrificially to supporting the

Sacrificial Abraham

ministry, which means we don't have money for other things. **Sacrificial service is good for wives and children too!** It helps them and us to clarify our own personal faith. To become Christ-like we have to learn sacrificial faith. And when our children are able to choose sacrificial faith for themselves we have to encourage and support them in it.

We can't claim our obedience is sacrificial until it hurts. Jesus said if anyone would come after me he must take up his cross daily and follow me. Jesus went to the cross in obedience to God for the salvation of others, for you and me. In following Jesus, we must be prepared to suffer and make sacrifices in order to obey God and for the salvation of others. Faith will make costly sacrifices when it's necessary to obey God.

The road that Abraham travelled from Beersheeba to Moriah was the way of the cross that Jesus walked and the way that every believer must follow. When God tested Abraham, He gave him the chance to purify his faith in costly obedience. Testing will come to every believer. It may cost the weekends, evenings, money, energy. Faith is costly!

Abraham received from God a substitutionary sacrifice! Genesis 22:13-19 ***Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went***

Sacrificial Abraham

over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ 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.' ¹⁵ The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.' ¹⁹ Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

The name of God changes here from **Elohim**, which stresses His power to **Jahweh** stressing His faithfulness. Abraham was about to discover the faithfulness of God in providing a substitutionary sacrifice.

John the Baptist said in John 1:29 *look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.* Just as the faith of Abraham was provided with a substitute, so our faith in God's promise is provided in the crucified Jesus who suffered the penalty of our sin. He is our substitute. God supplied the substitutionary sacrifice he needed. Christ

Sacrificial Abraham

died in our place, for our sins, to redeem us.

Christians today need the sacrificial faith that God can raise the dead, faith that obeys God at great cost, faith that welcomes the death of a substitute. To believe that God can raise our children from the dead. Any cost is worth paying to remain obedient to God. Abraham maintained his confidence in God, worked through tremendous sacrificial faith and discovered God was utterly faithful.

Personal Study Questions

- + Are we ready to make sacrifices for God that will test and purify your faith in His Word?
- + What areas of your life need to change to do so?
- + Will you be ready today?