



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Greatest Sacrifice

GENESIS 22:1-14

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Perhaps the most impressive and touching feature on the West Virginia capitol grounds is the Veterans Memorial. The nearly four million dollar structure was dedicated along with the WWII sailor sculpture on Veterans Day in 1995. The remaining sculptures of the WWI doughboy, Korean war aviator, and Vietnam war marine were dedicated on later Veterans Day observances. The memorial bears the names of over 10,000 West Virginians who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defending our nation during these 20th century conflicts. The memorial was built through both private donations and funds provided by the legislature. Citizens and elected officials alike felt it important to recognize and remember the great sacrifice made by our soldiers and sailors.

In our studies this year we have looked at how the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments, point us to the greatest sacrifice – the suffering of Jesus on the cross on our behalf. In order to truly understand the Bible we must understand that it is ALL about Him. In Luke 24 Jesus chided the two disciples on the road to Emmaus,

25“O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” 27Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

He goes on later to remind the larger group of followers that all the things written about Him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (the Old Testament) had to be fulfilled (Luke 24:44). In this study we will look at the event in the Old Testament that points most clearly to the greatest sacrifice made by God on our behalf. This is the account of God calling Abraham to offer his son Isaac:

¹Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ²He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” ³So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.

⁵Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” ⁶Abraham 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 the two of them walked on together. ⁷Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ⁸Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. ⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹²He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” ¹³Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. ¹⁴Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.” *Genesis 22:1-14*

In many ways this is a difficult account to consider. Any of us who are parents cannot imagine the struggle Abraham faced. The atheist or skeptic will read this story and determine they can not believe in or follow a God who would ask such a thing or place His follower through such an ordeal. God’s command to Abraham seems to go against His own prohibition against murder in Genesis 9 and His later forbiddance of any human sacrifice. We do not have time to deal with these objections other than to say God meant this as a test for Abraham. It is the very horror of this test which gives us a glimpse into the great sacrifice God the Father made for us as sinful people. There are many ways this account is a “reminder in advance” of what God would do for us. We will simply see how it gives us a glimpse into the heart of our Heavenly Father who would offer His own Son up in the place of sinful people.

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY, JULY 24, 12:00 NOON TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

West Virginia

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GOD'S COMMAND

God called Abraham to perform a seemingly impossible task. This had to be the most striking challenge ever issued to anyone. ***“Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”***

This command reveals to us to an important truth. God is a Holy God; He is the God of command. God is also a gracious and merciful God; He is the God of promise. He had promised Isaac as the son through whom God would bless. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. How can God be both holy & just and gracious & merciful? It is through the provision of a sacrifice as we shall see shortly. Abraham obeyed the God of command. Abraham believed the God of promise. This is certainly a great example of how we should respond to God as well.

ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE

Abraham rose early in the morning and proceeded to follow through on what God had commanded him to do. He demonstrated an unhesitating faith in God. The account is heart wrenching as we read of how ***“they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”*** Abraham is certainly a great example to us of one who demonstrated faith and obedience to God. He is listed in the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11:

Abraham's willingness to offer up His only son gives us a glimpse into the heart of God who was willing to offer up His only Son for us. As Abraham was ready to take the knife and slay Isaac, we read that the angel of the Lord interrupted and prevented him from taking the young man's life. The amazing truth of the account as it points us to the gospel is that when it came time for Christ to die for us, God did not stay His hand. The fatal blow was struck as Christ died for us. Isaac's words which must have torn at Abraham's heart, ***“Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”*** remind us of Jesus' words which must have torn at the Father's heart: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Yet God was willing to follow through in offering up His only Son for our sin.

GOD'S PROVISION

This account points clearly to how God provides salvation and forgiveness for each of us who will repent and trust Him. As Isaac asks about the Lamb for the sacrifice, Abram responds, ***“God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering”***. After it was all over, Abraham named the place “The Lord Will Provide” (Jehovah Jireh) This location is significant. This is the very site upon which Jesus would be crucified on the cross as the provision of forgiveness of our sin. The ram which served as a substitute for Isaac points to Christ who would be the substitute for us. But most vividly we see the picture of the Heavenly Father who was willing to offer His only Son as a sacrifice for us. This is clearly described for us in the New Testament:

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Romans 8:32

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 1 John 4:9

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

CONCLUSION:

Because of God's sacrifice of His own son, like Abraham we can obey Him as the God of ***command*** and believe Him as the God of ***promise***! How can we not respond to God's love and the greatest sacrifice He made for us?

- **“IF ABRAHAM HAD BEEN AT THE FOOT OF CALVARY THE MOMENT JESUS DIED, HE WOULD HAVE TAKEN GOD'S WORDS TO HIM IN VERSE 12 AND TURNED THEM AROUND. HE WOULD HAVE LOOKED UP AT THE FATHER AND SAID, “NOW I KNOW THAT YOU LOVE ME, BECAUSE YOU DID NOT WITHHOLD YOUR SON, YOUR ONLY SON, FROM ME”¹**

¹ Keller, Tim. *Real Faith and the Only Son*. Sermon at Redeemer Presbyterian Church. New York, NY.