

1851 - Gen 22:1-19 - FAITH & LOVE UNDER TESTING

PRELIMS. This morning I want to speak on the very important subject of **faith** and **love**! They are both **absolutely necessary** for our salvation - that is faith in and love to **Jesus Christ**! The Bible says *If anyone **has no love for the Lord (Jesus Christ)**, let him be **accursed*** [1Cor 16:22] And of course we all know that we are saved through **faith** in X's **work of atonement** on the Cross! *by **grace** you have been **saved through faith*** [Eph 2:8] ****It is appropriate that we study Abraham because he is the *father of all those who believe* in Christ Jesus - at least that what Apostle Paul taught!**

DCM defs:- **What is faith?** Includes believing in God's promise when the signs are all against us - when it doesn't look like it will happen! **Not** Holywood belief in oneself! ***What is love? Not** lust or infatuation, not feelings, but willing service! It is 'making sacrifices for'! ***Perfect Picture** of what we read many years later *So they went **both of them together*** [8], ie, **father** and **son** went up to the top of a hill together, and the son **carrying wood for a sacrifice** to do serious business! **APP** Now, we read much later on, of another **Father & Son** going up together up a hill called Calvary and the Son was **carrying wood** (the Cross) for a sacrifice, to do very serious business. God the Father was going to sacrifice His Son!

In **both cases** it was **primarily** an **act of love**! Abraham loved God more than his love for his **only**, longed for, son! Amazing! And God, demonstrated His love for **lost mankind** by sacrificing His one and only Son *God **so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that **whoever believes** in Him should not perish but have eternal life!***

After these things God **tested Abraham - what things? After a **long** life of **varied experiences**! Some good, some **painful**! Abram had strong faith to **leave his homeland** and travel, 'nobody knows where'? But conviction and love and faith in God enabled him! **APP** Jesus, leaving the **glories** of heaven, where He was **daily His delight** rejoicing always before Him [Pro8] all the adoration and blessedness of a perfect environment with perfect angels, and yet coming down to the **sin-cursed** world to be **ridiculed, murdered!***

Xnity does **not exempt** us from problems, sorrows, difficulties! Remember that! It was after Abraham's faith had **already** been **tested - severely!** Over a very **long** period of time! Abraham had to **wait patiently** for **decades** for Isaac, the **promised** son! His wife was **past** child-bearing age - yet he believed in God's promise that **somehow** it would happen! His **faith** was in God's **promise** not circumstances! To be proven in a test is most satisfying. Peter says that *the tested genuineness of your faith [is]—more precious than gold [1P1:7]* Not many people **really believe** that! Do you?

Did you notice that Abraham said he was going to **worship!** [5c] God was in it for Abraham, big time. God was **not** on the margins of Abraham's life - He was in in the centre! Everything **revolved** around God! **APP** The **whole** of life is a **worship** of God! There is no part of our lives in which we should not worship God! God is involved in **every single aspect** of our lives. No matter where you are, God is there, **to be worshipped** in whatever you do! *all things were created through Him and for Him* [Col 1:16]

The Contradictions of the 'Call'! To obey the command to offer up his son Isaac, **necessitated** the **negation/denial** of the great promise that Abraham was to father **many nations** for *in Isaac shall your seed be called* [21:12]!! Seemed **absolutely crazy** to human logic! Apart from being **pagan** in sacrificing your sons in the fire as the Molech worshippers around him! But this is the **very nature** of faith being tested! If it does not require faith, then it is not a test of faith! In **every** trial of faith there is a **puzzle** which **cannot** be 'reasoned' out! God **only** has the solution - we have to trust Him.

God is **not** playing **cat/mouse** with us when things go wrong! He is actually **strengthening** us and blessing us! Abraham's *faith was completed* or 'made perfect' by the ongoing tests of faith! He was **maturing** and getting to know God better - and thus - **enjoying** the life of faith and the **excitement** of watching God at work in his life!!

Think of the OT saints down through the years. All seemed to **contradict** some great **promise** which God made to them! Job *the thing that I feared has come upon me?* Noah - the laughing for there

was no rain before? Joseph's dreams? Moses and Pharaoh? Elijah and the drying brook? Paul, best evangelist, in prison?

God's 'tests' often involve **heart-rending decision making!** Think of how Abraham's **heart** must have felt *your **only son Isaac whom you love*** [2]. It was **exceedingly painful**. Many missionaries are **torn** at the thought of going abroad from their families and loved ones! You and I know the sequel to this story - Abraham did **not!** He had no idea of what was going to happen - he had it completely **wrong** for he **considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead** [Heb 11:19] which He didn't! Abraham **guessed wrong** as so many of us do today when we try and 'work out' God's plan for the world!

Dare I say that for Jesus, the Son of God on the Cross of suffering, did **not know** the sequel to His painful call to suffer? In the midst of the pain/agonies, he was **so confused** He cried out **WHY have You forsaken Me?** Was that not a **genuine question?** I think it was! He was **not pretending** that He didn't know why? But nevertheless **faith** in the Father, trust amidst confusion, enabled Him, plus the **joy** that was set before Him, He **endured** the Cross! Friends, just because your heart is **broken** in a Providence, does not mean God is not in it with His best intention for **you!**

Yes for Jesus there was faith in the Father's will - but there was also **LOVE!** Love for His people - the **joy** of seeing them in glory, completely redeemed, enabled Jesus to **endure!** **Imagine** - it was the **thought** of people like **you/me** being with Him in heaven, that enabled Jesus to persevere to the end! *the **joy** set before Him*

*The **painful process** of faith! There is a process to go through! Abraham gathering the wood; taking the **knife** - did he **sharpen** it? Setting the alarm with a heavy heart (how ever they did it) to **rise early rose early in the morning** [3] Imagine how his heart would thump when *he lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar!* [4] What did he tell **Sarah** everything? If he believed that he would return **with Isaac** (remember the word *come again* [5] is in **plural**) then he might not have needed to tell her about sacrificing Isaac! Would have mentioned anything in their evening **prayer/devotions?**

Would they have **discussed** it together? Would she have said ‘Are **you sure Abram** it is God and not Satan? It seems so contradictory’! Think of the **domestic rivalries** in the home how Hagar/Ishmael would ‘triumph over Sarah/Isaac and **laugh** as they did before! The thought of that would be painful and influential on their decision!

Think of the disciples who saw and touched the **dead body** of Jesus! **Stone dead!** The Messiah! Their hope must have completely faded! But the best was yet to be for them! The **resurrection!** And for Abraham-and for us also who have faith to persevere in love/service!

We read about Job who said *the thing that I feared has come upon me* Well, maybe there was **one thing** that Abraham feared more than anything else about the whole process. If so, I would think it would have been ‘**Isaac asking questions**’! Yes, he did ask that **dreaded question!** *where is the lamb for a burnt offering?* [7] They had always brought a lamb from the flock - but not this time??!

What a marvelous answer **God will provide for Himself a lamb** [8] That Mount Moriah from a distance may have been a **place of terror** to Abraham when he saw it from afar - but now it was the **most beautiful place in all the world!** Look at what he did - he took the **ram** that God provided and *offered it up as a burnt sacrifice instead of his son!*[13c] That is what God did to us believers - instead of punishing us, He punished His Son! *And then what did Abraham do? He **named** the place *The Lord will provide* [14]

APP And that friends is the **story of the gospel**, the Bible! God Himself provided the **sacrificial Lamb** - the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! Again we repeat *God so loved the world that He gave His only Son*. God was not niggardly, stingy, mean or **reluctant** in giving and providing salvation for us. He gave us the **best** he had, His own dear Son Jesus Christ! ***Self-centeredness** is the problem with the world! We think we can save ourselves! No! This is what the Bible is about - God provided a Saviour! Don’t think we can get right with God ourselves! Salvation is in God Himself! When you realise that, you will be filled with **love** to God - and your greatest desire will be to serve Him!