

“The Story of a Father and a Son” *Hebrews 11:17-19*

INTRO:

Today is Fathers’ Day and so we will spend our time looking at the account of a father and a son. This **text** asks us an important question, *“What is the most important thing in the world to you?”* Is it your job, your children, your wife, your husband, your car, your house, or something else? The second question this text asks us is, *“Whatever it is, would you and I be willing to give it to the Lord unconditionally?”* Are you and I obedient to the command in **Deuteronomy 6:5** *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength?”*

While we seldom have to face this question as these men did, Abraham faced it. In fact, it was because of Abraham’s response to this very question that we read what we read in **Hebrews 11:17**. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham was being tried. God was putting Abraham to the ultimate test. Amazingly Abraham obeyed! Of all of the monuments to faith in God’s hall of faith, this one must be one of the largest. As we enter into Abraham’s experience, we will see this in terms of two parts.

- I. Abraham’s Obedience (v. 17-18)*
- II. Abraham’s Assurance (v. 19)*

I. Abraham’s Obedience (v. 17-18)

A. We read in **verse 17**, *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.”* The word translated tried means in this context *“to put to a test.”* The details of this test are found in **Genesis 22**. Here we find Abraham faced with the hardest final exam that anyone has ever endured.

1. In In Genesis 22:1-2 we read God the test is given to Abraham. *“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now 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.”* I am sure God did not preface His test by saying, *“Now Abraham this is an applicational final exam, I am now going to test whether you have mastered the material that I have been teaching you about faith.”* The LORD just presented the test to him.

2. *WE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO ASK, “WHY DOES GOD SEND TESTS LIKE THIS INTO OUR LIVES?”* We understand that our human teachers have to give us tests to see if we have mastered the material because otherwise they could not know. But God is omniscient. He knows

all things. He knows whether we have mastered faith. If you were to break your leg or have surgery on your shoulder or knee, you would learn that part of the process of recovery is therapy. TRIALS ARE SPIRITUAL THERAPY. They stretch our spiritual muscles so that they are usable to us. A SECOND REASON FOR THESE TESTS IS TO SHOW US HOW WE HAVE MASTERED THE AREA OF FAITH. Romans 5.3-5 “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

B. So, Abraham is being severely tested. What is the essence of this test? GOD HAS ASKED OF ABRAHAM HIS MOST PRIZED POSSESSION. Isaac was Abraham’s whole life for several reasons.

1. First, Isaac was the son that Sarah and Abraham had waited twenty-five years for him. Remember God called Abraham from Ur to come to the land of promise and in the bargain had promised him a son, someone through whom the nation would come. He would be the one who would possess the land of Canaan. Twenty-five long years, Abraham and Sarah had waited. Twenty-five long years came and went and no Isaac. Finally, one day the LORD appeared and promised Isaac would be born in a year, and a year later this long anticipated son was born!

2. Second, Isaac was their unique son. In **Genesis 22:2**, God describes Isaac as **“your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac.”** When some read this statement, they immediately want to argue with God. What about **Ishmael**, he was Abraham’s son. Still, in God’s reckoning, Isaac was Abraham’s only son. He was the one who was **“the firstborn,”** not in birth order, but in privilege. Our text back in **Hebrews 11:17** uses the term **“only begotten.”** The Greek word suggests uniqueness. Ishmael was begotten by Abraham, but not in the miraculous sense that Isaac was. Ishmael had been put out of the family. Isaac was Abraham’s only son -- the son whom he loved. Abraham did love Isaac; far more than we will ever understand.

3. Third, Isaac was special because of the words of God’s promise. **Hebrews 11:18** tells us, **“He who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’”** Isaac was the personification of everything for which Abraham lived. He left the comforts of Ur for the promise of a land and a progeny that would be like the stars in the sky and the sand of the sea in number. For more than a third of a century, Abraham lived in a tent because of the promises. And he was happy to do so. Everything that Abraham lived for looked out at him through the brown eyes of his son. **Now, the God, who made the promise, asked Abraham to kill the son in whom all of those promises would be fulfilled. God said take him and give him to me!** WHAT WOULD ABRAHAM DO?

C. ABRAHAM DID EXACTLY WHAT GOD ASKED HIM TO DO (Genesis 22:3-4). ***“So 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 the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.”*** I used to think that it was amazing that Abraham rose early to obey God’s command. I think now that he may not have slept that whole night. It took three days to get to the area of Moriah and to prepare to be obedient. We are not told what went on in the heart of Abraham in those three days of traveling. I sure there was a battle going on inside of Him.

[] *“God, how can you want me to kill my son? You know that none of the promises that you made to me can come true if Isaac dies!”*

[] *“LORD, I know that You are Good and that you already know what You will do, but how in the world can this be Your will? I love Isaac, I don’t want to give him to You. I don’t want to kill him!”*

II. Abraham’s Assurance (v. 19)

A. We read in **Hebrews 11:19**, ***“[Abraham] concluding that God was able to raise [Isaac] up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”*** In the end, Abraham was so convinced that God could never lie, and that somehow God had a plan and was carrying out His plan that he simply obeyed.

B. We catch a glimpse of what was going on in Abraham’s mind two places in **Genesis 22**. First, we read: ***“And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”*** Unquestionably, Abraham expected to return with Isaac alive and well at his side. But how could he believe that when God commanded that he sacrifice his son?

We begin to understand when we read his answer to Isaac’s question in **Genesis 22:8** ***“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”*** This is a prophetic statement. God would indeed provide Himself a lamb. Not just a lamb on the day that Abraham and Isaac walked up that mountain, but also **“THE LAMB OF GOD”** who would come and die and take away the sin of the world.

C. Abraham’s final conclusion was that told us in **Hebrews 11:19**. When the substitute lamb did not appear before the altar was built and the fire wood was laid out. Abraham proceeded to do what he was commanded to do. He lifted his knife to plunge it into his son and kill him. **How could he do that?** It is because of the *second conclusion* that he had come to. ***“Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”*** It is the only answer!

D. God stopped Abraham, yet, the writer of Hebrews says, “*By faith Abraham offered up Isaac.*” This is so, because in his heart the act was done, and God counted what happened in Abraham’s heart as obedience to the command. Abraham had taken his son, his only son, his son whom he loved, and he put it on the altar and gave him, *irrevocably* to God! And it was that single act of faith that God forever immortalized in His hall of faith.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS SAY TO US?

To those of us who know the Lord as our Savior it speaks volumes. We started our study with two questions. **(1)** What is your most treasured possession? **(2)** Second, would you be willing to give that most important thing in the world irrevocably to Jesus? There is no guarantee that you would get it back. But if you are willing to do that, you would find a new dimension of blessing, like Abraham did! Do you love Him and trust Him this much? I hope so.

The other thing this asks us is do you know the Lamb that God provided? Have you put your trust in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?