

ABRAHAM'S FAITH (PART II): A SACRIFICIAL FAITH HEBREWS 11:17–19

Introduction

This act of Abraham is the supreme act of faith. This is the picture of sacrificial faith, the faith which God demands of every man, the faith without which a person shall never inherit the promises of God.

- I. His faith: a faith that obeys God regardless of cost (vv. 17-19).
- II. His reward: deliverance (v. 19).

I. *Hebrews 11:17–19 Abraham's Faith*

Abraham's faith was a faith that obeyed God regardless of cost. This demand made upon Abraham was the supreme act of faith (cp. Gen 22:1-18).

Gen 22:1-3 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 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." 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.

Gen 22:9-12 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. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "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."

Gen 22:15-18 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 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, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Heb 11:17-19 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, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Note two significant points.

1. God's unbelievable command. God commanded Abraham to take Isaac and to offer him up as a sacrifice to Him. To say the least this was a most unusual command, that is, God commanding that a human sacrifice be made to Him. William Barclay has a comment about this fact that states it well:

“To some extent this story has fallen into disrepute nowadays. It does not appear in syllabuses of religious education because it is held to teach a view of God that can no longer be accepted. Or, failing that, it is held to teach that the point of the story is that it was in this way that Abraham learned that God did not desire human sacrifice. There were days when men considered it a sacred duty to offer up their first-born sons to God, before they learned that God would never desire a sacrifice like that. No doubt that is true; but if we want to see this story at its greatest, and if we want to see it as the writer to the Hebrews saw it, we must take it at its face value. It was the response of a man who was asked to offer to God his own son “ (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 171).

What was God doing? We can say several things.

- a. God was testing the faith of Abraham in the most supreme way possible. We must always remember that God had made the supreme promises to Abraham:

=> The supreme promise of the *seed* of the Saviour, of God's very own Son.

=> The supreme hope of the promised land and of dwelling in the very presence of God Himself. And the inheritance was to be for eternity.

=> The supreme promise of an unlimited nation of people, a people that would endure forever.

=> The supreme promise of being a blessing to all the nations of the world, an eternal blessing.

A man who had received the supreme promises of God had to be tested in the most supreme way possible. And, no doubt, in light of what God demanded of Abraham, the most supreme way in Abraham's day and time was to demand that Abraham sacrifice his only son. Remember how difficult this was for Abraham. He loved Isaac dearly, for Isaac was not only his only son, but Abraham's whole life — his past and future were wrapped up in Isaac. Abraham had lived for Isaac, his only son. All the promises of God to him were wrapped up in Isaac. What an unbelievable faith Abraham had!

- b. God was using the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice to symbolize the offering up of God's only Son as the sacrifice for man's sins. God was also using Abraham's faith that God could raise up the dead to proclaim that man must believe that *God can raise the dead*. God is going to; therefore, man must believe it in order to be resurrected.

John 1:29 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

John 15:13 *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."*

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

1 Cor 15:3-5 *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.*

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

Eph 5:2 *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

- c. God was also teaching that man must trust God to the ultimate degree. Man must be willing to sacrifice the thing he loves the most and holds dearest to his heart. He must love God supremely, love God and His promises above all else. God will not accept second best and divided loyalty. He demands to be first in the life of every person. A person either puts Him first or else he is unacceptable to God and misses out on the promises of God.
2. Abraham's great faith was the ultimate faith. Abraham considered and thought through the demand of God. He knew God was God; therefore...
 - he knew that God gave no foolish commands.
 - he knew that God could stop him anywhere along the road to the mountain where he was to sacrifice Isaac, and if not, then God could raise Isaac from the dead.
 - he knew that God never broke His promises and that God could not fulfil His promises without Isaac.

Abraham counted God trustworthy — true and faithful to His promise. Therefore, he stepped out to follow God supremely.

Thought 1. Note how Abraham loved God supremely. Abraham put God above all, even above the person whom he loved the most, his own dear son.

Mat 19:26 *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

Mark 9:23 *"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."*

Luke 1:37 *"For nothing is impossible with God."*

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

Gal 3:6 *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Heb 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

James 2:17 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

Psa 62:11 *One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong.*

Psa 115:3 *Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.*

II. **Hebrews 11:19 Reward for Faith**

Abraham's reward was deliverance, the deliverance of his son from the dead. The idea is this: Isaac was as good as dead in Abraham's mind. Abraham was totally committed to sacrifice Isaac; he was totally committed to love God and His Word supremely. That was enough for God. God had His answer. Abraham believed God and loved Him above the most dear thing on earth. Therefore, when God stopped the judgment upon Isaac, it was like a resurrection from the dead. The point to us is the three lessons given in the former note:

⇒ We must trust God supremely, love and trust Him above everyone and all else.

⇒ We must believe God even when we cannot understand the ways and commands of God.

⇒ We must trust the sacrifice of God's own dear Son for our sins and trust His resurrection as the assurance of our being resurrected and living forever with God.

John 3:15-16 *That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

John 5:24-25 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."*

John 6:40 *“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

John 8:51 *“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”*

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”*

1 Cor 15:53-54 *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

2 Cor 5:1 *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

1 Th 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

2 Tim 1:10 *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Psa 49:15 *But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.*

Psa 71:20 *Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.*

Hosea 13:14 *“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? I will have no compassion.” ■*