

SONRISE

SMALLGROUPS

HEROES OF THE FAITH

SEPTEMBER 15, 2019

ABRAHAM: FAITH THAT IS TESTED (GENESIS 22:1-18)

MAIN POINT

Just as God provided the sacrifice to take Isaac's place, so He has provided Christ, the Lamb of God, to take our place.

INTRODUCTION

- What is the most difficult sacrifice or decision that you've ever had to make?
- How did this decision test your faith? How did your faith inform your decision at the time?

God in His infinite and mysterious wisdom sometimes leads us to do things that don't make sense to our finite minds. It is only after some time removed from the event or decision that we can see His purpose in it. In today's passage, God's command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac seems not only strange, but also morally atrocious. Yet, here we are given a glimpse of the gospel itself: blessing and salvation would come to the world through a son of Abraham who would be offered up as a sacrifice.

DISCUSSION

> Read Genesis 22:1-18.

- What is most shocking to you about Genesis 22 and God's command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? Has God ever shocked you with one of his commands in Scripture and/or with a life situation?
- Given Abraham and Sarah's experience with barrenness and God's earlier promises to them, why would this command come as a shock?
- Which details in verses 1-10 indicate that Abraham was obedient to God's command?
- How do verses 5 and 8 indicate that Abraham believed that Isaac would somehow survive the burnt offering?
- What does God's providing a ram as a substitute indicate about His character and grace?
- What does God's statement to Abraham in verses 16-18 say about His role in bringing about God's earlier promises to him and for the world (e.g., Gen 12:1-3)?
- How was the ram in this passage a foreshadow of the sacrifice of Christ?
- According to Hebrews 11:17-19, how does the story of Abraham and Isaac point not only to Jesus' sacrifice but also to His resurrection?

APPLICATION

- How does Abraham's trust in God—even to the point of nearly sacrificing his son—challenge you? What sort of things might God be calling you to sacrifice in order to demonstrate your trust in Him?
- Who do you need to share the grace of God with this week? How might you use the story of Abraham and Isaac to do that?

COMMENTARY

Genesis 22:1-18

22:1-2. Abraham's ultimate test of obedience to God is described in 22:1-19. God used this event to affirm the sterling character of Abraham's faith by giving him the incredibly difficult task of sacrificing his son Isaac. Pagans in Canaan during the OT period regularly practiced child sacrifice by making them pass through the fire (2Ki 16:3) to give them as food to their gods (Ezek 23:37). With this command God was asking Abraham to demonstrate that he was as committed to the Lord God as pagans were to their gods.

22:3-4. Confirmation of Abraham's amazing trust in God is found first in the fact that he was up before sunrise (early in the morning) the next day to begin the journey. His diligence in going to the place God had told him about contrasts sharply with Jonah's actions (Jnh 1:3). Traveling from Beer-sheba, it was not until the third day that Abraham reached the Jerusalem area.

22:5-8. Evidence that Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:17-18) is found in his comment, we'll come back. Abraham carried the most dangerous elements of the sacrifice—the fire and the sacrificial knife—himself, perhaps as a sign of his protective love for Isaac. Ignorant of God's command and surprised that his father would forget the most important element in an animal sacrifice, Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb was. Abraham's faith-filled response was that God Himself would provide the lamb ("sheep").

22:9-14. Abraham followed the standard procedure for a burnt offering involving a living being. In describing his preparation, the Bible emphasizes only Abraham's systematic acts of obedience, omitting any mention of Abraham's or Isaac's feelings. Just before the knife was put to Isaac's neck, the Angel of the Lord spared him. The patriarch had passed the test, providing experiential evidence that he feared God more than he loved his only son. Exactly as Abraham had predicted (v. 8), God had miraculously provided a sheep—and the most prized variety, a ram. To memorialize the event Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide.

22:15-18. As the Angel of the Lord who had the Lord's authority, the divine emissary delivered a second message (v. 12), this one in the first person. Because Abraham had passed the "priorities test" by obeying God and not withholding his only son, the Lord would indeed bless him with offspring, victory, land, and goodwill.