

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Tonight we are touching on the final accreditation of faith ascribed to Abraham. In this little story we see the culmination of all that God has been building into Abraham since He first visited this man in Ur.

Abraham's journey of faith was rough; he was not on the "fast track" when it came to learning his lessons of faith. We find that Abraham was not only stubborn and flat out refused to obey the Lord, but he was a man who, oddly enough, was controlled by fear.

To me that was always odd since this man was a fighter. I know we have not gone into the detail of this, but there is a lot of evidence to support the notion that Abraham came from a line of professional fighters—mercenaries. They were hired by local governments for protection. We clearly saw that Abraham and his men had some serious fighting skills when he took 318 men and successfully waged war against 4 kings who invaded Canaan. But despite this "fighter" background, he was still ruled by fear.

We are given a pretty clear understanding from **Genesis 11:31-32** and **Acts 7:2-4**, that Abraham was afraid to leave his father, his homeland and all that was familiar to him. And even though God made him a promise that he would be the

father of a great nation, Abraham feared for his life. In two separate incidents he basically sold out his wife in order to protect his own skin. It was shameful but Abraham did not seem to even give it a second thought.

Think about it; the second time he sold out his wife came right after the Lord appeared to Abraham and said in 1-year I will return and you will have a son and it will be through Sarah. And that was after many other visitations and encounters with the Lord that were entirely supernatural. But despite all that, Abraham's fear would well-up inside his soul and instead of trusting himself to the Lord he would follow his fear and self-protect.

Fear, is one of the most powerful tools in the enemy's arsenal. And even though, in Genesis, we don't get to see behind the scenes into the spiritual world, we know from what has been revealed to us in the rest of the Bible that the enemy was hard at work attempting to devour Abraham with fear just like he does you and me. Yet, the Lord tells us over and over again, "do not fear."

I believe that the size of our fear is in direct proportion to the size of our God. If our view of God is that He is the creator of all things, the one who holds all things together, the sovereign Lord who either directs or allows all things, the lover of our soul who delights in the details of our lives, our Good Shepherd who leads us down right paths, and the faithful guardian of our soul, then fear will not have any real place to take root in our lives.

But if in our heart our view of God is small, if He is disinterested in our lives, if He is distracted unaware, if He is random, arbitrary, mean, cruel, hurtful and enjoys making us suffer, if He is unreliable, if He is deaf to our cries, if He is unable or unwilling to intervene in the affairs of our lives, then fear will be planted so

deep in our soul that it will rear its ugly face and we will do things that are unthinkable in a foolish attempt to be what we are afraid God will not be for us.

Sadly, for the biggest part of Abraham's life his view of God was far too small. This is why God had to prove Himself to both Abraham and Sarah over and over again so they could finally believe that He is not just God but their God. And He did; He proved that He would be faithful to fulfill His word even when Abraham and Sarah were completely unfaithful.

It is the same thing God does in our lives. He continues to bring up circumstances in our lives where we must make a choice to depend entirely upon the Lord or else take matters into our own hands. A big part of our life seems to be about training us to realize that taking matters into our own hands is always the wrong decision. For when we play "god" we never truly experience peace, rest, or joy and we never really have confidence in the direction which our lives seem to take us.

Rather, we stay locked in the prisons of our fear and although we have found a way to make ourselves comfortable in that place, it is not at all how God wants us to live. In fact, if truth be told, we would probably all admit that it totally stinks to live in that cage of fear. But we know it so well, we have grown quite accustomed to it, we know what it demands from us, and we have learned to survive the consequences; but the exchange is simply not worth it.

Every time we respond to fear and take matters into our own hands we do not fulfill the will of the Lord for our lives. In fact, the fulfillment of His will in our lives comes when we let God be our God convinced that all the paths He leads us on

are lovingkindness and truth (*Psalm 25:10*) and that His will is always good, acceptable and perfect (*Romans 12:2*). Those two truths are fear busters.

It took Abraham over 25 years of his life to learn why he can trust himself to God and how to trust himself to God. It took him all those years to learn that the Lord is not just God but is his God. Abraham suffered years and years of failure and his faith (or lack thereof) was up and down like a crazy roller-coaster, but finally he crossed over. Finally, he believed that God would do everything that He said He would do. Finally, his belief gave root and grew into a tree of faith. Finally something clicked and he got it.

So what clicked? Well, I am sure it had a lot to do with the fact that when He was 100 years old, after years and years of infertility, Sarah, his wife, became pregnant just as the Lord promised him 25-years earlier. God did what He said; He kept His word, just as He had all along.

Abraham probably also began to appreciate the fact that they were protected every where they went; they were abundantly provided for every where they went; they were honored every where they went; and they were personally instructed by God all along the way. And for some reason, it took this final miracle of the birth of Isaac before it all came together and his faith became rock solid.

Look at the change in his attitude. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his one and only son, through whom the promise would be fulfilled, Abraham went for it without hesitation. He knew that God would do whatever is necessary to fulfill the promise, even, if necessary, pull out some crazy miracle like raising Isaac from the dead.

It is clear that Abraham had learned that God would do what He said regardless of how “scary” or impossible the circumstances might seem. Abraham’s faith became radical and his fear quenched. Abraham learned that he could trust himself and his one and only son completely into the faithful arms of God.

Let’s turn to **Genesis 22** and review the story. As we read, I want you to keep your spiritual antenna up and alert. If you do, you will find that this story is entirely prophetic and points forward to Jesus Christ. This is not just a story about God toying with Abraham in order to test his faith; rather, it is a picture, a foreshadowing of what the God the Father was going to do with His one and only Son. Do you remember in **10:7** we were told that the scroll of the book was written about Jesus? Well this is one of those direct instances, and it is dead on; which, by the way, I think is totally fascinating.

So often we get all caught up in the detail in the books of Moses that we forget it all points to Jesus. All of it was written about Him. The lives of these Old Testament characters were all carefully woven together in such a way, under God’s sovereign hand, that they reveal to us the Son. How is that for amazing?

Genesis 22:1-3

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take 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." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac.

And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

The first thing we are told is that God tested Abraham. This is an interesting comment. I want you to understand that God testing our faith only seems like a pass/fail exam; but it's not. God is sovereign. He knows the beginning from the end; He already knows how we are going to choose.

He knows when we are going to fail and He purposely uses our failure to strengthen us, encourage us, build us up, prove to us that He is faithful, and convince us that it is better to rely on the Lord than on ourselves. He also knows when we are going to succeed and our testing seems to always provide us an opportunity to experience God do the supernatural in us or through us.

So I believe that we are to understand our times of testing as God giving us the opportunity to stand in what we know to be true so that we become even more rooted and grounded in our faith. It's all about training and strengthening us so we become men and women who live and abide in faith.

And since it is a test (at least from our perspective), it usually comes in the form of something we would, absent faith, not be able to handle. For example, in **Genesis 21**, the Lord told Abraham to send Ishmael away with his mother. So he already lost one of his sons whom he loved dearly. Losing Ishmael must have been a gut wrenching experience; and now God is asking him to sacrifice Isaac. Wow, that's heavy.

I think it is important to note that Abraham was tested in the very area that was closest to his heart: his desire for a son to carry on his name. God tested him

in the area of his hope, the area of his promise, and I believe the area of his greatest fear. I think his desire to have this great noble son from whom a nation would be birthed was likely the reason Abraham was so worried about protecting his own life. This was truly a test of all tests. Remember this when God decides to test you in the area of your hope, your promise and the area of your greatest fear.

I want to take a quick moment to explain the difference between testing and tempting. We are told in **James 1:13** that God does not tempt anyone and He doesn't. He will most definitely arrange for and put us in situations—very difficult situations—where we get to choose to believe in Him and we get to practice believing in Him. However, the temptation comes when we start listening to our *Old Sinful Nature* which tells us to not trust God but to trust ourselves.

According to **James 1:14-15**, we are actually tempted when we give into our own lust (our desire to be like “god” – our desire to take matters into our own hands) and when this lust (or, said another way, when our fear that God will not be our God) becomes so intense and overwhelming it gives birth to sin.

But God is not in the temptation; that is the role of our *Old Sinful Nature* and the enemy. God is in the testing; yet He has provided us the ability to always choose to follow Him. In fact, according to **1 Corinthians 10:13**, He even intervenes in our lives when we are being tempted and He always provides for us a way of escape—always; in every temptation! He never just leaves us to our own devices; He is always there to help us succeed. But since He is behind the testing, He always leaves it to us to choose—either the route of lust or the route of faith.

In this instance, Abraham clearly chose the route of faith. When God called to Abraham he instantly responded, “here am I” (this reminds me of that passage we

read two weeks ago in **Hezekiah 10:8** about how God trains us to trust in Him so that when He speaks to us—or whistles—we come running).

And despite the fact that what God said should have totally freaked Abraham out and pushed on every “fear” button within his body, he responded practically. The next morning he got up early, saddled up his donkey, cut the wood, took his son and two of his servants, and left for the land of Moriah.

Before we move on, did you catch the reference to Isaac being Abraham’s only son? Isaac was not the only son; he also had Ishmael and Ishmael was the oldest son the rightful heir to all things.

You see in God’s eyes, Ishmael was a product of Abraham’s flesh. Ishmael was a product of unbelief; as such, God does not deal with him in the same way that he deals with the child of faith. In fact, God sent Ishmael away so that Abraham would not be tempted to go back and deal with his flesh and give the son of his flesh the cultural honors of an eldest son.

The promises of God are only fulfilled through faith and the works of our flesh literally get thrown away or tossed aside. I have said this before and I am sure I will say it many more times, God recognizes only our obedience of faith; all else is considered worthless.

We see this truth in **Hebrews 6:8** where God said, “But if a field bears thistles and thorns, it is useless. The farmer will condemn that field and burn it.” And again in **John 15:6** when He said: “If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.”

Remember, without faith it is impossible to please the Lord (**Hebrews 11:6**). So we never find God honoring or in any way dealing with the things our flesh as if they are somehow good. He deals with his children on the basis of faith.

This truth is hard for most of us. It seems we always want God to honor and deal with the paths that we have chosen and make those a part of His good and perfect will for our lives. For example, we saw Abraham try and convince God to let Ishmael be the one (**Genesis 17:8**). But God refused; the promise would come through a lineage of faith (which is why God had to wait so long before He could give them a child; they had to become a man and woman of faith).

Likewise, like Cain, we want God to honor our offerings of the flesh—the things we want to give to God. But God will have nothing to do with it. It is meaningless and completely useless. **God is only pleased by the offerings that come by way of faith.** We need to learn a lesson from Abraham in this regard. Abraham finally relented to the Lord and was ready to follow His will no matter what it might cost.

We are now going to get into the thick parallelism this story makes between Isaac and Jesus, Abraham and the Father. Notice that Isaac traveled to the place of offering with two men just like Jesus climbed this same hill with the two men who would be crucified with Him. Jesus also brought the wood for the offering. In addition, Isaac came to the land of Moriah presumably on the donkey since he was only a boy and the 50 miles between Beersheba and Moriah was probably too difficult of a journey for him. Jesus also came riding into the land of Moriah on a donkey (**Luke 19:34**) just days before He was offered as a sacrifice.

Genesis 22:4-8

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham 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 they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

So they traveled for that magic number of "3" days—the perfect number of days until they landed in Moriah and Abraham then lifted up his eyes and saw the place God had designated; the place where Isaac would, in a sense, according to ***Hebrews 11:19***, be raised from the dead. This is the same interval of days that it would take Jesus to rise from the dead.

It is also more than interesting to note that Moriah referenced in verse 2 is a compound word consisting of ra'ah (to see) and Yaah (the abbreviated form of Yahweh—the sacred name of God). The name signifies the manifestation or appearance of Yahweh which on this day is exactly what happened. God made Himself manifest to both Abraham and Isaac in a glorious way.

You also have to know that it was on this spot that Jesus made Himself manifest to King David, as the "Angel of the Lord." David sacrificed to the Lord on what was then the threshing floor of Araunah to stop a plague of death that had

come upon Israel and to stop the Angel of Death that was ready to destroy Jerusalem. David first offered burnt offerings for sin and then peace offerings and with these acceptable offerings the Lord answered his prayer and the plague stopped and the angel relented (**2 Samuel 24:16-17**).

This same mountain is where Solomon built the first temple of God and God made Himself manifest in the magnificent glory that descended upon the Temple.

It is also where the Garden of Gethsemane was located in the area known as the Mount of Olives to the east where Jesus was arrested on the night of His betrayal. And, if you have not already guessed, it is also the location of Golgotha where Jesus was crucified; where God provided the lamb to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. In fact, many believe that Abraham took his son to the exact location where Father God took His Son to be sacrificed.

We can tell from this next statement that Abraham did believe that if necessary God would raise his son from the dead. He tells his servants that he and the boy are going to go and worship and then come back to them. He never thought for a moment that he would leave the body of his dead son on that mountain. Abraham carried the fire and the knife so he was intent on there being a death, but he did not believe that it would be his son.

Keep in mind, however, that nothing in his immediate circumstances indicated anything other than the fact that God wanted him to worship by offering up his son, for real. I am sure he was unable to emotionally or rationally to reconcile the command of God with the promise of God that Isaac was the one through whom his descendents would come. Yet Abraham's faith in his God, knowing that He

would do exactly as He promised, is what enabled him to climb that mountain knife in hand, knowing that somehow, someday his son would live.

Abraham then took the wood and laid it on Isaac in the same way that the wood for Jesus' sacrifice was placed on His back and He carried it up that same mountain. As I said, it is all a prophetic foreshadowing.

So they both went together. I love that picture. Even though the terror of the moment, the anticipation of what might happen, was beyond description, I am sure that Isaac was comforted because his dad was with him. I believe that even though the terror of the moment was beyond description for Jesus, He was also comforted knowing that He was in the center of His Father's will and I am sure His Dad walked with Him up that mountain.

In **Genesis 20:10**, God told king Abimelech that Abraham was a prophet; even though at that point in the story we really did not see him do anything very prophetic. But now we do see him operate as a prophet. Not only was every action prophetic but also his words. Isaac cried out to his father in the same way that Jesus cried out to His Father. Then Abraham said: "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering." With these words, Abraham spoke a prophetic truth that would be fulfilled almost 2,000 years later. God would provide the lamb.

Yes, God would provide the lamb so Abraham would not have to sacrifice his son, as Isaac was only a type—a partial picture—of Jesus; but when it came to His Son, the Father would not stop just in the nick of time. No, He would go through with it and offer up the Lamb of God as the perfect and total sacrifice for our sins.

Genesis 22:9-14

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

How epic is this story; simply unbelievable. Isaac was bound and laid on the wood helpless to do anything about his situation, just like Jesus was bound and laid on the wood in a helpless condition. It is interesting but we have no record of either Isaac or Abraham freaking out. I can't imagine why not except that the intensity and the solemnity of the moment must have been so unimaginable that no one could say anything or do anything. It again foreshadows the way Jesus was like a lamb led to slaughter and did not say a word in protest (*Isaiah 53:7*).

Abraham was doing this thing for real. He was not pretending. His son was bound, the fire was ready, and all that remained was the blood. He took the knife in his hand reached out and was ready to take the life of his son, his one and only

son. But the Angel of the Lord, who as we all know is Jesus, calls out to him from heaven and says (most emphatically) Abraham, Abraham! Instantly, Abraham responds, “Here am I.”

Then Jesus tells Abraham to leave the boy alone and in this sense his life was given back to him. In this sense, he was as good as dead and made alive. All of this again is a prophetic picture of Jesus who would die and yet be made alive.

Jesus then confirms Abraham’s faith saying “for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me. As we said, Jesus already knew the choice Abraham would make so this was not exactly a revelation, but He is painting a prophetic picture for us of the way the Father would not withhold his Son, His only Son, from you and from me.

It is also a picture of how a man or a woman of faith reserves nothing for themselves but is willing to give it all up for the Jesus. We see this so clearly in the lives of the Apostles and all the martyrs of the early church. They did not even consider their life to be of value when compared to the surpassing privilege of knowing Christ. Even Paul said that he suffered the loss of all things and counted those things rubbish so that he might gain Christ (***Philippians 3:8***). It is all so remarkable. Abraham set the example for us to follow and clearly many others have followed down his narrow path of faith.

A sacrifice would be made that day on that mountain top, but it would not be Isaac. God mercifully intervened and Himself provided the solution. Abraham lifted up his eyes and lo and behold there was a ram stuck in the bushes and Abraham offered it up as an acceptable offering to the Lord. The sacrifice was

pierced with the point of the blade in the same way that Jesus was pierced with the point of the Roman spear.

Therefore, speaking as a prophet of God Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." And on the mount of the Lord it was provided.

God Himself provided the lamb. God the Father freely brought down the knife upon His Son knowing that Jesus would also be given back His life and rise from the dead; and, in so doing, free you and me from the bondage of sin and death. God mercifully intervened on our behalf and provided for us the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Jesus was bound so we might be set free. Jesus died so we might live. Jesus offered Himself to the Father so that through Him we might freely offer ourselves to the Father. He took upon Himself, in our place, the full wrath and punishment of God for our sins; and, in so doing, became our great and beautiful Savior.

In addition, the statement, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided" also prophetically points to Jesus' second coming. When Jesus returns He will come to this same mountain (***Zechariah 14:4***) and establish His kingdom on earth. From Moriah He will rule the nations of the earth with all His holy ones (***Revelation 20***).

And the prophecy has not ended. Let's continue.

Genesis 22:15-19

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this

and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

First of all, we know that the angel of the Lord is Jesus because He not only swears by Himself but He is also referred to as Yahweh which means Lord. But look at His promise; Jesus promises to bless Abraham with so many offspring that it is ridiculous—there will be too many to count. His offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies or shall be completely victorious over all the cities that the enemy once possessed. And all of this was promised because Abraham obeyed the Lord's voice.

Like the verses before it, this passage is a prophetic picture of how the Father would bless the Son and provide Him so many descendents that it is ridiculous—there will be too many to count. In addition, Jesus' children will be victorious and conquer the enemy and with Jesus rule the nations of the earth.

I want to turn to probably one of the most amazing Old Testament passages in the book of Isaiah. It speaks to this promise of blessing that the Father made to the Son for being obedient to His word in the land of Moriah—the promise that is fulfilled in you and me and all those who profess the name of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

52:13-15. See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about.

53:1-12. Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and

had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

This is our story. This is the story of how our Lord and Savior gave up His life on Mount Moriah so we can be counted righteous and be part of that great gathering of descendants. And keep in mind, this prophetic and detailed passage was written by Isaiah over 700 years before Jesus' death. And the events of Abraham and Isaac which also prophetically painted this picture in exacting detail occurred almost 2,000 years before Jesus' death.

What an unbelievable story of faith. Because Abraham had finally crossed over, because it all finally clicked, because his belief had turned into faith; he was able to walk down a dark and treacherous path in complete confidence knowing that God was his God. He knew His son would live (just like the Father knew His Son would live). And, in so doing, Abraham provides us with one of the most potent Old Testament pictures of Jesus Christ.

Abraham was tested and his faith proved true, it proved solid, and it proved indomitable all because His God had proved Himself to be faithful, true, solid and indomitable. By the way, His God is our God. His God is your God. And your God has also proved Himself to be faithful, true, solid and indomitable. Just look at the cross and consider how much you have been forgiven.

Maybe you are not quite convinced. I understand; I really do. But I know that God is going to keep testing you until you get so sick of yourself and sick of all the ways that you try and manage and determine your own life; and simply give up and give in to His love for you.

Abraham crossed over; it's time that you cross over. I know that many of you are sitting still and not really moving and when God calls your name instead of saying "here am I" you are covering your ears hoping He will stop talking; hoping He will just move on.

Drop your hands, open your ears, listen to the sound of His voice and simply say, "Here am I." You will not be disappointed and I will guarantee that, like Abraham, you will experience the supernatural in you're here and now; you will see God manifest Himself as He did on Moriah. And when your back is up against the wall, in some way, somehow, He will faithfully provide.

Let's Pray.