

An Obedient Father

Genesis 22:1-18

INTRODUCTION

- A. There was once an Arab sheik who became convinced that the terrible deity he worshipped had commanded him to bury his daughter alive.
 - 1. He made known his conviction to the girl, and with that extravagant filial respect characteristic of the Orient, she consented to be sacrificed.
 - a. He dug the grave with his own hands.
 - b. He took the fair young girl in his arms to thrust her down into the pit to be buried alive.
 - c. But at that moment she noticed that in digging the grave a piece of moist earth had clung to his long white beard, which is the pride of the Arab heart; and she stretched forth her hand to remove it as a final act of affection.
 - 2. Her deed of love so touched the heart of the old fanatic that he spared her life and carried her back to his home.
- B. This morning's passage is something like that- a God who commands a father to sacrifice his son.
 - 1. Abraham is very highly regarded for his actions in this episode, and rightly so.
 - 2. On this Father's Day, we wish to explore the actions of the "An Obedient Father" in regard to his son.
 - 3. As far as pure literature goes, this is one of the greatest texts in the Old Testament; Moses put this text together masterfully.
 - a. In reading through Genesis, we have no advance warning that God would dare make such a request.
 - 1) In the stories of Cain and Abel and Hagar and Ishmael, we see God's upholding the dignity of human life — he strongly punishes Cain and provides for Hagar, but here he requires the murder of a child.
 - 2) The shock value in the text likely serves to jolt the reader in a way similar to the jolt that had to come to Abraham.
 - b. We methodically see Abraham's carrying out God's request- cutting wood, taking fire, building an altar, and binding his son. This likely serves to make the reader stop to ponder, "What was going through Abraham's mind?"
 - c. The suspense is great in this text — this story is prolonged and makes you wonder, "What exactly is going to happen?"
 - d. I think there's a reason that this narrative is such a rich piece of literature — the episode narrated here is an important one.
- C. In this narrative we see: ABRAHAM LOVED GOD MORE THAN HIS SON, ABRAHAM TRUSTED IN THE LORD, & ABRAHAM RECEIVED BLESSINGS FROM THE LORD.

ABRAHAM LOVED GOD MORE THAN HIS SON, vv. 2-11

- A. God came and told Abraham, "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," v. 2.
 - 1. Isaac is here referred to as Abraham's only son — you know in a strict sense that Isaac wasn't Abraham's only son (he had Ishmael with Hagar), but Isaac was the child of promise.
 - 2. Isaac is here referred to as the son whom Abraham loved.
 - a. Any father is going to love his child — we expect to find parental love even among the most depraved human beings.

- b. Yet, Abraham had every reason to view Isaac in a different light than other fathers view their children — this child was given to him in extremely old age and this was the child of promise (the child through whom God would richly bless Abraham).
- B. We're not told that Abraham said anything to the Lord; instead we simply read of his obedience to the command. Notice that obedience:
1. Early the next morning, Abraham got up and went on his journey.
 - a. This was not a man who was going to delay his obedience: he left the very next day, and he got up early so that he could go first thing.
 - b. It's troubling to see people delay obedience.
 - 1) Some of you are sitting here this morning having every intention of becoming a Christian at some point. You might say something like, "I'm going to get around to it."
 - 2) Abraham wasn't like that — he understood obeying God was of prime importance. He wasn't going to wait and get around to it later, but he was going to do what was right as quickly as he could.
 2. He cut enough wood for the offering and went on his journey.
 - a. We here see a prepared obedience.
 - 1) It would have been far easier, I'm sure, to have waited until he got to Moriah for Abraham to cut the wood.
 - 2) But, who knows if Abraham would have been able to have found ample timber once he arrived in Moriah — Scholars don't know where this Moriah was, and it may have been that there wasn't any timber to cut in Moriah and Abraham knew that.
 - b. You see, Abraham made sure that he had everything in order so that he could obey God when he got to Moriah.
 - 1) How many of us make sure that we have everything in proper order so that we can obey God?
 - 2) I've had people tell me things like: "Justin, I have some things in my life I need to straighten out before I'm baptized. Let me straighten them out, and I'll do it." If there are things you need to take care of so that you can obey God, be like Abraham and do it.
 3. You also see Abraham has prepared obedience in that he carried something to start a fire — called "fire" in the text- and a knife with him.
 4. When Abraham and Isaac got to the appointed place, Abraham build the altar, arranged the wood on it, bound his son, laid him on the altar, and took his knife to slay his son.
 - a. Parents, can you imagine the agony Abraham must have felt at this point?
 - 1) Imagine for a second taking your child, whom you love more than life, binding his hands with rope, taking a knife to slay him, and burning him with fire.
 - 2) There are not words to express the emotions Abraham had to be feeling.
 - b. Yet, God had called him to obey, and obey he did.
- C. How much do we value obedience to God?
1. Do we value obedience to God to the extent that we love God more than we love our family?
 2. Scripture has called upon us to value spiritual matters more than family matters.
 - a. Jesus valued his heavenly Father more than he did Mary and Joseph.
 - 1) When Mary and Joseph took the young Jesus to Jerusalem, they lost him, and finally found him in the temple, Jesus said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:49).
 - 2) When Mary and Jesus' brothers came to see Jesus, the Lord replied, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk. 3:35).
 - b. As large crowds were following Jesus, he turned to them and said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes — even his own life — he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:26).
 3. How much do we value God in relation to our families — do we value God or families more?

- a. Do our children see that when we discipline them that we don't just discipline them because we love them but also because we love God? Do they see that our discipline involves upholding God's standards?
- b. Do our children see that although Sunday morning is beautiful — a beautiful day to spend with them at the park with a picnic, t-ball, and fishing — that we're going to worship God first and only then will we have that "quality time"?
- c. Do our children see that our highest aspiration in life is obedience to our heavenly Father?
- d. How much do you value obedience to God?

ABRAHAM TRUSTED IN THE LORD, vv. 7-8

- A. Isaac asked his father, "The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" v. 7.
 1. Isn't Isaac about in for the shock of his life!
 2. Can you even begin to imagine the pain that question must have caused for Abraham? Here is the son of promise, the son of his old age, the son he loves deeply, and he just has to go and ask, "Dad, where's the sacrifice?"
 3. Can you imagine the puzzlement that has to be in Isaac's mind? Here is dad has taken all this preparation — gotten up early, brought wood, fire, and a knife — but Dad hasn't brought a sacrifice.
- B. Abraham simply says, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son," v. 8.
 1. It might be easy to discount Abraham's remark and simply say that Abraham only wanted to allay his son's fear.
 2. However, that doesn't seem to be the proper way to read this verse.
 - a. The literary structure of the passage doesn't lend easily to that interpretation.
 - 1) This verse foreshadows verse 13 where in fact the Lord does provide for the sacrifice.
 - 2) This verse also foreshadows verse 14 where the place where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac is called "The LORD Will Provide."
 - b. Heb. 11:17-19 also points to Abraham's confidence in God.
 - 1) From what we read in Hebrews, it seems that Abraham fully expected to offer his son.
 - 2) Yet, Abraham knew that God would provide — what he did not know; perhaps a resurrection — but he knew that God would provide.
- C. What a lesson for us about putting confidence in the Lord!
 1. It's easy to put confidence in the Lord when things are going well- when our spouse and kids do what we think they ought to do, when the bank account is padded quite nicely, and when our job is secure.
 2. But, that's not when Abraham put confidence in God.
 - a. This God in whom Abraham was putting his trust was the very God who said, "Go, kill your son."
 - b. Are we able to put trust in God when God doesn't seem to make sense?
 - 1) When God has acted in a way other than we think he should have acted, can we put trust in him?
 - 2) When God hasn't prevented some terrible event we wish he would have prevented, can we put trust in him?
 - 3) When obeying God and doing what we want conflict, can we put trust in him?
 3. Trust in God is absolutely essential.
 - a. "Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal" (Is. 26:4).
 - b. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him" (Jer. 17:7).
 - c. "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22).

- D. It is said that Martin Luther, the great reformer, faced period of great depression and discouragement in his life.
1. On one occasion, his wife came down to greet him at breakfast, dressed in black.
 2. He exclaimed, "Why in the world are you dressed in black?" She replied, "Have you not heard? God is dead."
 3. Luther got the point: there was no point in being depressed and discouraged. God lives, and all is well.
- E. Is your trust in God? Or, is your God dead?