

The Sacrifice of Isaac
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Scripture Reference: selections from Genesis 12-22

Good morning church family. I come to you today in somewhat different manner as I know those in physical attendance are going to be hearing me only and those on Facebook or zoom only “might” be able to see and hear me.

Today’s topic is one that I have debated on whether or not I wanted to do, mainly because of my past upbringing. If I were to do this message in my southern Baptist church, we would need to call a hazmat crew in to clean up the mess from everyone’s head exploding. So, with that caveat out of the way I hope that this message is better received today.

Let’s begin with the background topics. Today I want to share with you my thoughts on a passage that I have struggled with for a while now. I would absolutely love to hear your thoughts and your positions on it. As iron sharpens iron, right? Even if that feedback is you think I am totally wrong and way off base, how dare I even think that, well, I want to hear that too.

The topic at hand is the sacrifice of Isaac. See, my problem with this passage is most monotheistic religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism all revere Abraham as a Godly man, wonderful, righteous, the father of the faith. I tend to agree, but this passage causes me pause. First off, the Christological implications are dripping in these passages. Both Isaac and Jesus are “beloved sons” who have been long-awaited and are born in miraculous circumstances, Both sons carry the wood that is to be the instrument of their deaths on their backs, In both cases, the father leads the son, and the son follows obediently toward his own death, God provides the sacrifice and in the New Testament was Jesus, Jesus was also an innocent son who went willingly up the mountain to be crucified.

My problem is that Genesis 22 is the end of an era for Abraham. If you look at the history of Abraham and God, you notice that God and Abraham spent a lot of time together. In Genesis 12 God says leave your country and I will make a nation out of you. Later in the chapter he tells him I will give all the land to his ancestors. Genesis 13 God again said I will give your ancestors all the land you can see as far as you can see. In genesis 15 God and Abraham have a long drawn out conversation that spans the entire chapter. Chapter 17 is the same way an entire conversation. In Genesis 18 God needs to go to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if their sins are as bad as God has heard. Here Abraham actually intercedes and stops God from destroying the town if he could find 50 righteous people. Again, he stops him if there are 45 righteous, then 40 then then 30, then 20, then 10. This is the original reverse auctioning that we have written.

Genesis 21 God tells Abraham to not worry about anything because through Isaac God will make Abraham a nation.

Now we are at Genesis 22, my problem passage. God tells Abraham to take Isaac to the mountain and kill him as a sacrifice. Abraham says sure God, no problem, I'll totally do that for you. He takes Isaac, a couple of servants and heads off. They get to the mountain and this is where the story gets weird. Abraham knows he is going there to kill Isaac, yet he tells the servants that he and the boy will return... ummm, how...? If Abraham really believed that both would return, where is faith??? Also, Abraham didn't tell Sarah about any of this. I mean can you imagine that conversation? Hey sweetheart, have you seen my good knife, I need it to slaughter our kid because God told me to on a mountain that I don't know yet at a time I've not been told and for reasons I don't know, but it was totally God though."

So, Abraham tells no one, tells the servants WE will be back and then they head up the mountain. They get up there and Isaac notices no offering. What do you think went through his head as Abraham grabbed the rope and bound him up? Do you think Isaac went peacefully? Sure dad, kill me, that's cool. Or do you think that Isaac put up a fight? I ask because I imagine that Isaac put up a fight for his life and God was there emotionally torturing Isaac for what purpose? To teach him something? To teach Abraham something? Or since the next verses say that God learned Abraham would obey, was this to teach God something? (Insert exploding southern Baptist heads here).

After all this transpired, notice what DID NOT HAPPEN EVER AGAIN... God NEVER spoke to Abraham again after this. They went from a long, happy, supportive, creator/creation relationship to God ghosting Abraham, swiping left on the Abraham profile, absolutely throwing out the "New phone, who this" response to Abraham. WHY? Why would God suddenly stop talking???

This brings me to my point... I think.... Maybe God did know all along. Maybe Abraham knew all along. Abraham didn't need faith because he knew God would never allow this to get followed through on. Even if God did allow it, that would violate God's decree against child abuse. Plus, God can raise people from the dead and God promised a nation through Isaac, how could he deliver that promise if He allowed Isaac to be killed? See, this was not about faith. Abraham obviously doesn't have a problem going toe to toe with God as he did in defending Sodom, so why not defend his son? The one that God somehow claims is his only son, the one he loves. Is this how you show love? Why clam up now? Why not speak up and defend Isaac?

This was God's problem with Abraham, it wasn't that he was obeying God's order, God is perfectly in His right to demand someone be killed and to authorize someone to do it. The killing of Isaac at God's command wasn't the problem, it was that Abraham was blindly following God without faith and relying on his own instincts and intuition. I don't think that God wants us blindly following what we think God wants us to do but to use the God given innate ability to discern what is true and righteous and what is not.

According to me, I feel like God does not want blind reactions without faith. He does not want us to blindly be trusting, he wants us to blindly trust. Trust that God is right and righteous but to also call into question when things don't seem right. Abraham stood up to God for Sodom but not for Isaac. I think if Abraham would have stood up to God the same way for Isaac, he too would have been blessed but in a different way. I think that had he shown God that he was going to use the brain he was given by God to discern right from wrong that the torment and torture of Isaac could have been avoided.

So finally, when you hear God telling you to do something, do not be afraid to speak up, challenge God on that and ask is this really what you want me to do? Is this really what your will says for me to do? I want to make sure I am hearing you right and that I don't think I am getting something from you when I am not. I will blindly trust you, but I want to trust you knowing that it is really what you want and not what I am interpreting. Many times, what we think we hear and what God is trying to tell us are vastly different things. In this fast-paced life, we need to stop and smell the roses through our noses and stop to confirm our notions from emotions. This can help us to discern what God does and does not want from us.

Finally, look to your life. Are you the Abraham or are you the Isaac? Are you the one who is following what you think God is telling you, even when that may not be what you are supposed to be doing? Or are you the one laying down your life for what you believe in? It doesn't have to be literal death but are you dying to self for God? Where are we the Abraham and we could use a time out to discern if this is God's will for our lives and where are we needing to be the Isaac where there is something that we are hanging on to that maybe we shouldn't and we should be willingly laying it down trusting that the outcome is better for us and that God will provide in that moment. Trust in God that God will provide but have faith that it may not be what we like or what we want.

Amen