

MINISTERIO LA FUENTE



# RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

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## SACRIFICING ISAAC

**W**e are going to look today at the greatest, most painful, most exacting trial that a human being has ever faced.

No human being in history had faced a trial of this magnitude before, and no human being has faced a trial like this one since.

This person was not a wicked man, he was not a bad man, he was not a godless man. He was not a careless man, nor was he an irresponsible man. He was a godly man, a man full of faith and kindness, a man whose life revolved around God, a man who walked humbly with his God.

So the trial did not come to him due to some sin or failure in his life.

But nor was it the devil, an evil spirit, or indeed any kind of enemy that brought this trial into his life.

His best friend was the one who brought this trial into his life.

The man was old; his best friend was ageless. The man was wise; his best friend was wisdom itself. The man had faith; his best friend was faithfulness. The man had known love; his best friend *was* love.

The man and his dear wife had one treasure greater than any other on earth- their only son. Born in their old age, he was the joy of their hearts and the laughter in their lives. All their hopes and dreams and aspirations were tied up in this son. And not only their hopes, but the hopes of millions throughout history.

Then one night, the best friend asked something of the aged man. The friend asked the man to take this only son, and with his own hand, to kill him. He gave no reasons, no explanations, no comfort.

The man was Abraham. The best friend was God.

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**N**ow it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Abraham lived in relationship with his God. When he heard God's voice, he recognized it and responded immediately. God was now going to test him. Abraham was over 100 years old and had already been tested many times by the Lord. But this test was to be in a league of its own.

*He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."* Can you even begin to imagine the impact of these simple, direct words on Abraham? Abraham knows his God. He knows that his God is love, is wisdom, is faithfulness, is God. And now this same God is commanding him to kill his own son.

Every word that God spoke in this moment is significant and measured and directed; each word seems to be fashioned like an arrow to pierce beloved Abraham's very heart.

"Take now..." There was to be no time for questioning, no time for debating, no time for final memories to be made, no time even for farewells. He was to leave *now*.

**God wanted the blessing back.  
God wanted the promises back.  
And Abraham had to offer them  
to him.**

"Take now your son, your only son..." God reminds Abraham that this is not just his son; this is his *only son*. Abraham had another son Ishmael, but the son he was to sacrifice was his only son with his beloved wife Sarah.

"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love..." God reminds Abraham that this is the son whom he loves! In these three words he causes Abraham to remember all the joy and fun and tenderness and affection that is bound up in his relationship with his only son.

"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac" Abraham already knows who God is speaking about, but like another arrow crafted and fashioned especially to pierce the very depths of Abraham's heart, God now states his name, Isaac. Not many years before, the Lord had visited Abraham and Sarah and promised them that in their old age they would have a son and call him Isaac. Not only would this child be a miracle and blessing for Abraham and Sarah, the child of their love. But God also promised that he would make an everlasting covenant with him and with his descendants. He was the chosen one through whom God would bless the nations. Further, "Isaac" means laughter. He was the joy and laughter of his parents lives. So now, as God states his name, Abraham was in an instant reminded of all the joy and promise that was bound up in Isaac. Now Isaac was to die.

"and go to the land of Moriah" Moriah was a three days journey away from this place. As Abraham journeyed through those three days, with his beloved son, he would turn over in his mind again and again and again all the joy and blessing that his son Isaac was to him and Sarah; all the promises that God had made about Isaac and his descendants. All the joy and promise that was about to die, at his own hand! He would have time to consider the possible consequences of this act. He would have opportunity to agonize over the pain that this was going to cause Sarah. Maybe she would die inside, overcome by the agony of the death of her only son. Maybe she would turn away from God, unable to come to terms with his apparent change of character, with the severity hidden underneath a cloak of kindness. Maybe she would turn away from Abraham, in pain and pity and terror, believing that it was his fanaticism that had caused him to kill his own son. Maybe he would be rejected by all who knew and loved him, when they heard of his cruelty in offering up his own son. How would he possibly bear to look in his son's loving and confused eyes as he brought the knife to his throat? And what did this speak of God? In the final analysis, was his God no different from the gods of the heathen nations, who demanded the sacrifice of their dear children to please and appease them? He had always felt that God was different to them, but was he wrong? Abraham had three days to agonize over these things, while every step was a step closer to the awful moment in which he would kill his only son, the son whom he loved, Isaac.

"and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." The final arrow fashioned to pierce Abraham's soul. These words meant death to everything in which Abraham had hoped against hope, believed against belief. They meant the premeditated ending of all that God had promised and all the joy and blessing that he had given. And Abraham himself was to bring those things to an end with his own knife. God wanted the blessing back. God wanted the promises back. And Abraham had to offer them to him. Abraham had to wield the knife that would bring the hopes of millions to an end. Abraham had to wield the knife that would kill his very own beloved son. His God had told him to do this. No man has ever faced a trial like this one.

<sup>3</sup>So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

God had spoken one single sentence of command to Abraham. God had given no explanations. God had offered him no comfort, no reassurance of his continuing love and faithfulness. Just the simple, stark command. Give me back what I have given you.

But Abraham did not demand explanation. He did not request comfort nor seek reassurances. **He simply obeyed.** He arose early, to give time for the journey. He saddled his donkey. And he split wood for the offering. God had not told him just to kill his son, he had told him to offer him as a burnt offering. So Abraham carefully prepared everything. He prudently considered that there may be no wood available where he was going, so he split wood to take with him. He was choosing to obey every word God had spoken to him. With all his mind, heart, soul and strength. There is no hint of questioning. There is no hint of complaining. Just simple and thorough obedience.

<sup>4</sup>On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. <sup>5</sup>Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

**Abraham did not demand explanation. He did not request comfort nor seek reassurances. He simply obeyed.**

“we will worship and return to you” This old man knew his God. He had total confidence in God’s love, in God’s wisdom, and in God’s faithfulness to his own promises. God had promised that the nations of the world would be blessed through Isaac’s seed. God would fulfil his promise because God is faithful. Even though he was about to kill the very one about whom these promises had been made, he knew the promises would be fulfilled. “we will worship and return to you”. He believed God would raise Isaac from the dead. What tenacity of faith and trust in the character of God, in the midst of such a trial! This was only possible because Abraham knew his God.

<sup>6</sup>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 the two of them walked on together.

Imagine the pain and difficulty in this father’s heart as he took the final steps of this journey with his son. Even believing that God would raise him, Abraham was clutching a knife that he knew he soon would have to use against his own son; and carrying the fire that would burn his son’s body until all that was left would be the faith that God would raise him.

<sup>7</sup>Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup>Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

The son, attentive, intelligent, and schooled in the custom of offering burnt sacrifices to his father’s God, asks his father where is the lamb. Yet another arrow to pierce Abraham’s heart. Abraham had lovingly answered many of his son’s inquisitive questions in times past, and now answers with the same gentleness, using words designed as ever to build up his son’s trust in God. Abraham is completely unmoved in his resolve to obey his God; but this resolve does not manifest itself in harshness. Abraham knows his God. He knows his God loves him just as he loves his son Isaac. There is no need for panic and there is no need to shut down his feelings for his son in an attempt to dull the pain. With his heart wide open and his son walking at his side, Abraham nears the place of sacrifice.

<sup>9</sup>Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Abraham is obedient to the very last detail. The preparations have been made.

Isaac does not fight or struggle against his father. His father believed God wanted this to be done; and Isaac has learnt to submit to both God and his father. He knows that both love him. As Abraham quietly and resolutely obeys God, so Isaac quietly submits to his father. As his father trusts God, he trusts his father.

<sup>10</sup>Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. The moment has come. Abraham takes the knife and prepares to kill his only son. Why is he doing this? Because God has told him to do it. He has no other reason.

<sup>11</sup>But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Once again, the voice of God! The voice of that beloved, best friend. The voice of the faithful one, the wise one, the loving one. The last time this voice spoke, it was to instruct Abraham to kill his son. Now the voice is speaking again! Does Abraham shrink from the voice? Does he close his heart up, afraid of what will be demanded next? No. Abraham knows his God. He has no fear. He knows his God is love. His heart is open and so are his ears.

<sup>12</sup>He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Abraham knew his God; so he knew the voice of his God. He did not live his life on the basis of laws and stubborn principles. Instead, he knew his God and lived in contact, relationship and fellowship with him. If this had not been so, he would have thought it was the devil speaking to him when he was told to sacrifice his son; or he would have thought it was the devil speaking to him when he was told not to sacrifice his son. Abraham lived in relationship with God and obedience to God’s voice. He was ready to obey God by sacrificing his son, and he was ready to obey God by not sacrificing his son. He lived in relationship and not religion.

Now the reason for the test has become clear. Would Abraham hold the gifts of God dearer than God himself? Would he hold the promises of God dearer than God himself? Or would he be willing to let go of all, to give it all back to God?

**Abraham knew his God; so he  
knew the voice of his God.**

**A**re you willing to give all back to God? All of your gifts, blessings, even the promises and callings he has given to you? Which will you hold dearer, the gifts or the giver? We are not called to look for things to sacrifice. That is religion. Until the day that God spoke and told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the thought had never entered his head. He enjoyed his son and he delighted in the promises of God. He was not searching around for precious things to sacrifice. That is religion and death. But when in relationship God spoke to him, telling him to make this sacrifice, he obeyed. And if God shows you that you must travel to Mount Moriah with your Isaac, with knife and fire in your hand, you also must obey.

<sup>13</sup>Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. <sup>14</sup>Abraham called the name of that place *The LORD Will Provide*, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." It was a test for Abraham, it was also a lesson. God will provide for his purposes to be fulfilled. Abraham passed the test, in his heart sacrificing Isaac back to God even before he took the knife in his hand. Now God stepped in to show him that the ultimate that God wants of us is not the sacrifice of death, but that we LIVE in obedience to him. To obey is better than to sacrifice. God wants us to be living sacrifices for him. Isaac became a living sacrifice, and his life gave glory to God!

<sup>15</sup>Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, <sup>16</sup>and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, **because you have done this thing** and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup>**indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.** <sup>18</sup>" In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Oh, how God values our obedience! Look what streams of promise and blessing flowed to Abraham from the mouth of God there on Mount Moriah, because Abraham had been obedient! "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you..." The promise does not die- it is reaffirmed more powerfully than ever before.

<sup>19</sup> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba. So Abraham returns home with his son, living and rejoicing in his God. He returns to a place of even greater blessing and peace and strength in his God. All because he trusted God and was obedient.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Hebrews 11:17-19 NASB)

We are born again. As God provided a sacrificial lamb to take Isaac's place, so he provided a sacrificial lamb to take our place- his precious son, Jesus Christ. The work of our salvation is finished through that offering, and we must not try to make sacrifices in order to appease our God. The work is done.

As Abraham received Isaac back "from the dead", so **God** has received us back from the dead because we died in Jesus and have been raised to a new life in him. Now our part is to live as living sacrifices for our heavenly Father!

Abraham knew his God and walked in relationship with him. That is how he knew God's voice. Abraham was an obedient man, and while he obeyed, he never flinched from trusting in the character of his God: the God of love, wisdom, and faithfulness. Even when he was called to sacrifice his precious Isaac. Let us trust in our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Let us prize him above all his gifts and all his promises. Let us live and enjoy him. And if he calls us to give back to him something dear which he has given us, like Abraham, let us trust him and obey. The reward is great, and his plans for us are glorious.

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME  
TO ME AND DRINK" - JESUS ( JOHN 7:37 )