

(Genesis) Genesis 22:1-2

by J. Vernon McGee

Abraham's test of faith, where he is asked to sacrifice his only son, highlights the importance of trusting God's goodness and faithfulness, even when it doesn't make sense.

Duration: 8:22

Scripture: Genesis 15:6, Genesis 22:1, Genesis 22:9, Matthew 6:33, Romans 4:1, James 1:13, James 2:21

Topics: "Genesis"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Abraham and Isaac from the Bible. He addresses the apparent contradiction between James and Paul regarding Abraham's justification by works. The preacher suggests that both James and Paul are correct in their statements. He explains that Abraham's act of offering Isaac as a sacrifice was an act of faith and obedience, demonstrating his works of faith. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the context and purpose of James and Paul's teachings in order to reconcile their seemingly conflicting statements.

Transcript

Now, very candidly, I recall the first time that I saw in this chapter these great truths that depict the cross of Christ. It was breathtaking, and I'm sure that many of you have had this call to your attention, but again, not only in the birth of Isaac, but now in the sacrifice of Isaac, there is a strange similarity. The very interesting thing is that James makes a statement that I'm sure many of us think contradicts the Bible, that is the other part of the Bible, when he says in James 2, 21, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? And then Paul makes the statement in Romans 4, verse 1, What shall we say then that Abraham our father hath found as pertaining to the flesh? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof the glory, but not before God.

For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it is counted to him for righteousness. All right, now which is right, James or Paul? Well, my answer is both of them are right. First of all, you need to note that both of them are talking about the same thing.

James is talking about the works of faith, not the works of the law, and you find that Paul is talking about justification before God. Now, Paul quotes way back in the 15th chapter of Genesis, when Abraham was just getting underway in a walk of faith, and only God knew his heart, and God saw that he believed him. Abraham believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness.

But we saw that he failed many times, and I am of the opinion that his neighbors might say, Well, we don't see that. But the day that he took his son to be offered on the altar, even the hard-hearted Philistine had to say, Well, this man has works. And so James says he was justified by works when? Well, when he offered Isaac.

But the question is going to rise, Did he really offer Isaac upon the altar? And the answer, of course, is he didn't. But he was willing to, and that very act of being willing to is the act that James is talking about that reveals that he had the works of faith. And James is emphasizing the works of faith, which is in the 22nd chapter of Genesis.

Paul's talking about faith in his heart, which he had way back in the 15th chapter. Now let's turn to this and begin to read. And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham.

And he said, Behold, here I am. Now, the word tempt is a little bit too strong here. Actually, the word means test, because James, you know, makes it very clear that God never tempts anyone with evil.

God tempts folks in the sense that he tests their faith. And what he's doing here is God did test Abraham. And he's asking him now to do something very strange.

Will you listen to this? And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of. You're going to find, by the way, that right after this chapter that Sarah was 127 years old, chapter 23, verse 1 says that, when she died. And we have the death of Sarah in the next chapter.

The very interesting thing is that when you put that down with this chapter, you find out that this boy Isaac wasn't just a little lad. Now, remember that 90 years old was the age of Sarah when he was born. 127 when she died.

That means that there was 37 years elapsed here. Now, you wouldn't gather that from reading this. So this boy, little lad Isaac, as he's called here, he actually was in his 30s, probably around 30 or 33 years of age.

Now, God says to him, and it reveals something of the heart strings that it played upon Abraham and also God himself. Take now thy son. And the Lord Jesus, in the position in the Trinity, has taken the position of the son.

Thy son, thine only son. And the Lord Jesus is said to be the only begotten son. Thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.

And the Lord Jesus said, the Father loves me, whom thou lovest. And get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of. Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get to the land of Moriah.

And it's the belief of a great many that Moriah, that is the particular part there, is the place where the temple was built. And it is the place that the Lord Jesus was sacrificed, that is, right outside the city walls. I didn't quite get oriented in Jerusalem, but I had a feeling that Golgotha and the temple area were not very far apart, and they belong to the same ridge, by the way.

There's a roadway in times past, it's been cut through there, and it's been breached, but it's the same ridge, and that is called Moriah. And it's the belief of many that the Lord Jesus died on the same ridge, the same mountain, that Abraham offered Isaac. And now he's to be offered for a burnt offering upon the mountains, which I'll tell thee of.

Now, the burnt offering is the offering up till the time of the Mosaic law, and then a sin offering and a trespass offering was given. But here, the burnt offering speaks of the person of Christ and who he is. Now, this is an offer of a human sacrifice, and frankly it raises this moral question, isn't this wrong? And the answer is, yes, it's morally wrong.

But let's look at this for just a moment. I'm of the opinion, had you met Abraham that day on the way with Isaac, you would have said to him, where are you going, Abraham? He'd said to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, and you'd have said, well, don't you know that's wrong? And I think he would have said, yes, I've been taught that it was wrong. I know the heathen nations around here, the Philistines, they offer human sacrifice, but I've been taught otherwise.

Well, why are you doing it? Well, he said, all I know is God has commanded it. I don't understand it, but I've been walking with him now for 25 years. He's never failed me, nor has he asked me to do anything that didn't prove to be the best thing.

And I don't understand this, but I believe that if I go all the way with it, that God will raise him from the dead, because I believe that he'll do that. Now, what we have is that Abraham, he goes out and takes this boy with him.

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