

¹ 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. ² 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. Genesis 22:1-2 (KJV)

A long time ago I was questioned about the brutality of the repeated animal sacrifice of the Jewish faith. “It seems to brutal and senseless” my friend said. Yes, it was brutal and I suppose it could be seen as senseless. Frankly, if it were up to me, I would not have had all those animals’ throats cut and all that blood shed. But we need to understand the awfulness – the horribleness of sin. Sin is that horrible and God’s love for man so great that nothing could stand in the way of God providing for the atonement and forgiveness of man’s sins.

The animal sacrifice in Jewish faith pointed to the sacrificial death of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ on the cross. Over and over again seemingly countless times innocent animals were sacrificed in order to point to the efficacy of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and shed blood on the cross. We need to take seriously this business of sin. We all are sinners and because of this we are separated from a relationship with God. Without this relationship man cannot survive eternity. Man was created for a proper relationship and without this relationship his life is a fraud.

The Horribleness of Sin. Paul give us a graphic image of this sort of fraudulent life in his gospel to the Romans:

¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: ¹⁴ Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes. Romans 3:10-18 (KJV)

Sinful man is in a horrible state – a state of sinfulness. The problem with sin is that left unchecked it leaves a man completely ruined in every way – morally, spiritually and physically. Look at what Paul says in Romans 3 – at the end of the argument sin leaves a man:

- Without righteousness,
- Godless,
- Completely gone out of the way – without purpose, direction, aimless.
- Utterly worthless.
- The throat is an open grave.¹

¹Their throat is an open sepulchre—By their malicious and wicked words they bury, as it were, the reputation of all men. The whole of this verse appears to belong to their habit of lying, defamation, slandering, etc., by which they wounded, blasted, and poisoned the reputation of others.

—Adam Clarke's Commentary

- Completely deceitful,
- Destruction and Misery are a way of life.²
- Murderous,
- The way of peace is unknown to the sinner without God.³
- Without God the sinner has no controlling fear of the consequences of sin.

The problem is that we are created beings – not just the product of a biological process. We learn in the Psalms that God takes an active part in our gestational process.⁴ In a previous lesson I have said that we are a paradox – on one hand we are God's creation and on the other hand we are sinners – hopelessly separated from God.⁵ This is a very grim picture of sinful man. The fact is that man needs redemption – man needs to be reconciled to God – he quite literally needs to be saved – from himself and the whole effect of sin.

The Importance of Redemption and God's Passion for It.

If we can draw proper conclusions from the picture painted by Paul man is quite dense and hard-headed about sin and the need for salvation. This is why through the ages there has been animal sacrifice and why we come to this lesson this morning – a very disturbing one if we think very long about it. But the unmistakable lesson we can draw from this account is that sin is horrible in its consequences but God's passion for redeeming man is greater. Yes, there are disturbing implications of human sacrifice but as we will see later on the obvious thrust of this account is not some cruel, empty act of human sacrifice to appease an angry god but that of faithful obedience of a man of faith and the eternal lesson of a loving Heavenly Father willing to offer His only begotten Son so that the world might have an atonement for all sins and that NO ONE not be afforded the opportunity for forgiven sins and a proper relationship with the LORD.

God feels this strongly about redemption – the lesson is visceral. In order that the world be offered atonement for sins – God was willing to offer His Son as a sacrifice as the Lamb of God.

The Sacrifice of Isaac Was a Foreshadow.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.
Hebrews 11:17-19 (KJV)

A lot has been said about the morality of human sacrifice – a common practice among the pagans. Why would God ask this of Abraham? Before we address this directly let us

² Man leaves desolation and distress behind him. This is included in [Isaiah 59:7](#) which we have quoted. —J. Vernon McGee's Thru The Bible

³ And the way of peace have they not known—They neither have peace in themselves, nor do they suffer others to live in quiet: they are brooders and fomenters of discord.—Adam Clarke's Commentary

⁴ [Psalm 139:13](#).

⁵ [Things that Matter Most Part 1](#), page 2, last paragraph.

remember that Abraham was very aware of the seed of promise being through Isaac. So whatever road Abraham and Isaac was walking that day to the mount he knew that he and Isaac were going to be returning from the mount.⁶ **In his eyes this was going to be a worship experience.** What was going through Abraham's mind during this experience? Well, we know he was thinking of his progeny and that it was going to be through Isaac. He knew that Isaac was a 'miracle baby' in the first place – that Isaac was conceived after Abraham was sexually 'dead.'⁷ So, as the writer of Hebrews said, Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead should the sacrifice be consummated. Adam Clark points out that the deadness here was that Isaac was potentially 'dead' being the designated sacrifice.⁸ Abraham received Isaac back from the 'dead.' My comment: twice now – first being born even though Abraham was sexually dead and then should the sacrifice be consummated receiving Isaac back after being resurrected from the dead).

Such was not to happen. This whole account was a very personal real-life lesson that God was going to spare sinners (including Abraham and Isaac) from deserved punishment of death and that there was going to be a substitutionary atonement. It foreshadowed Jesus Christ – as Isaac was received back 'from the dead' so Jesus Christ would be raised on the third day after His death on the Cross. Remarkable imagery.

The Sacrifice of Isaac Was Voluntary.

⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? ⁸ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. Genesis 22:6-8 (KJV)

Abraham knew that God was not asking him to murder his son so that another son might be the progenitor of his seed. No. He knew full well that this was going to be a worship of the LORD and as such all the promises were still intact – eternal. So he obeyed God. I find it interesting that Isaac carried the wood, don't you? It would seem a prefigure of the carrying of the Cross by Jesus Christ on the way to his crucifixion.

Isaac's question showed that he wasn't completely in on the plans – it did show that he was an obedient son and accepted the fact that God would supply a lamb for the burnt offering – an offering of complete consumption. When the moment of truth came could Isaac have resisted? The answer is yes. With Abraham around 125 years of age and Isaac around 25 the struggle would have been a foregone conclusion. The fact is this wonderfully illustrates that this

⁶ ⁴"Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

⁵ And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Genesis 22:4-5 (KJV)

⁷ See [Romans 4:19-21](#). Being a hundred years old he was sexually 'dead.'

⁸ "The clause may therefore be thus translated: 'Accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead, from whence he had received him, he being in the most imminent danger of losing his life.'" —Adam Clarke's Commentary

sacrifice was entered into voluntarily by both the father and the son ([see Adam Clarke's commentary insert on this](#)) and wonderfully depicts the agreement between our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son.

Jesus Christ Became Incarnate So That He Might Be a Sacrifice.

⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. ⁵ Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: ⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Read Hebrews 10:1-7 (KJV).

This whole account reveals the passion of redemption's plan. Surely there must have been a struggle in the heart of Abraham. And when Isaac heard when he realized that HE was going to be the lamb why wouldn't there be a struggle in his heart? It appears not on the outside. I certainly agree with Adam Clarke on this point; *"Every view we take of the subject interests the heart, and exalts the character of this father of the faithful. But has the character of Isaac been duly considered? Is not the consideration of his excellence lost in the supposition that he was too young to enter particularly into a sense of his danger, and too feeble to have made any resistance, had he been unwilling to submit?,,,"* Now let's consider our Heavenly Father and His beloved Son. Was there a great struggle between the Father and the Son over the matter of the Son's sacrifice? No. The conclusion was foregone – Jesus said '**I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.**' This accounts wonderfully prefigures the heart of redemption between our Heavenly Father and the only begotten Son – there was no struggle because Justice demanded payment in full for sin and Love responded in the offering of the Son as sacrifice.

The Ram Caught in the Thicket - Becomes a Figure of Christ.

¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen. Genesis 22:13-14 (KJV).

Remember Abraham's response to Isaac's question 'where is the lamb?' Indeed the LORD will provide and He did. The ram here becomes Christ on the cross – sinful man has no need to worry about a vengeful god taking out his wrath on his sins. We have a provision for salvation and that provision is Jesus Christ the only begotten of the Father: "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**" John 3:16 (KJV)