

The Path to Splendor

(Gen 22:1-14) Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² 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." ³ 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. ⁴ On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵ 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." ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² 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." ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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."

1. God Will Be FIRST

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."

God called Abraham's name and he immediately answered, "Here I am."

Abraham's quick answer is a wonderful example of how we should respond to God.

Unlike Adam and Cain, Abraham wasn't hiding from God.

God says, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac."

God adds, "Your only son Isaac, whom you love."

INTERESTING FACT: this is the first mention of love in the Bible, and it comes in the context between a father and a son.

... And Abraham loved Isaac ...

... Isaac was the son God had been promising Abraham and Sarah for a lot of years

God is going to see who is first in Abraham's heart ... Isaac or God.

... and every phrase of God's command to Abraham was sheer agony

- Take now your son.
- Your only son Isaac.
- Whom you love.
- Offer him there.
- As a burnt offering.

The Burnt offering was not an offering that was burned alive, but one where the life is first taken by sacrifice and then the body is completely burnt.

That's pretty awful

But the worst part of this test was that it seemed to contradict the previous promise God had made to Abraham.

God had already promised Abraham that through Isaac his descendants would bless the world.

... and yet God is asking Abraham to kill the son that was promised.

Abraham knew the difference between trusting the promise of a son, or trusting the one who has

made the promise.

If we are not careful, we can find ourselves loving God's promises more than we love God Himself.

... we may even believe that we are responsible for bringing God's promises to pass ... but we are not!!!

... even feel it is our responsibility to bring the promise to pass, even if we have to disobey God to do it. Trust the Promiser no matter what, and the promise will be taken care of.

“Brethren, there are times with us when we are called to a course of action which looks as though it would jeopardize our highest hopes... It is neither your business nor mine to fulfill God's promise, it is our business to obey. For us it is duty alone, for God it is the fulfillment of His own promise, and the preservation of our usefulness in His kingdom.” (Spurgeon)

God's way rarely makes sense to us at the first.

- Noah building an ark when it had never rained
- Moses holding out his staff over the Red Sea
- Joshua and Israel marching around Jericho 7 days straight
- Gideon fighting 15k Midianites with just 300 soldiers who only ha a torch, trumpet, and pitcher.
- Naaman dipping in the Jordan river 7 times.

God will ask of you whatever it takes to ensure that He is first in your heart.

God doesn't mind if you and I love and delight in earthly things just so long as the love and delight in those things doesn't become greater than our love and delight for God.

God was concerned that Abraham loved Isaac more than Abraham loved God.

Our God is a jealous God and He is jealous for His people.

if one of God's children become overly possessed with the things of this earth God will step in and do what it takes to help us get our priorities back in order.

... there are times when God has to take away a person's position, possessions, wealth, popularity or whatever in order to remind them about what is truly important.

... this is certainly not the only reason for loss ... but it can be one of the reasons for loss.

... isn't that why Paul had a thorn in the flesh

... isn't that why Job suffered loss

... this is certainly why King Saul lost his throne

A.W. Tozer said this, "*The way to deeper knowledge of God is through the lonely valleys of soul poverty and abnegation of all things.*"¹

God is taking Abraham through this difficult and bitter experience—not because God hates Abraham,

... not because He is punishing Abraham

... God is taking Abraham through this valley of sorrow because God wants Abraham to experience the wonderful freedom that is only realized when God is first in his life.

... This is the same thing that God wants for you and me.

If we are going to truly, deeply, and passionately know God then we must put God before everything else.

We must be more possessed by the wonder of **who He is** and **what He has done** than we are with getting and having.

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*.

God says to Abraham, give me...*your son ...your only son ...Isaac...whom you love!*

God is testing Abraham...

... putting him through a process of purification.

God is going to make sure that He remains on the throne of Abraham's heart.

GOD WILL BE FIRST!

2. God should be TRUSTED

⁷ 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?"

In this story we watch as the group approaches the place of sacrifice,

Abraham tells the servants to wait, while he and Isaac will go on alone

Abraham places the wood on Isaac's shoulders, and they walk together in silence...father and son.

Finally, Isaac asks his father in *Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?*

... Abraham responds, *God will provide*, and they continue to walk on.

Finally, they reach the place, and Abraham builds the altar

... places the wood on the altar.

Abraham binds his son Isaac, and lays him on the altar, on top of the wood.

There is no indication of Isaac resisting,

... no mention of Isaac screaming out, crying, struggling or attempting to run away.

The climax of the story comes when Abraham draws the knife and holds it up.

It is a moment when we are holding our breath.

THAT, MY FRIEND IS THE MOMENT OF TRUST!

Anybody can say they are going to trust God ... but it is entirely something else to actually trust God.

... the proof of trust is obedience ... EVEN WHEN IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

- Elijah made a altar on Mt. Carmel, doused it with 7 barrels of water, and then asked God to set it on fire ... that's trust.
- Three Hebrew children said to Nebuchadnezzar, "O King we will not bow to your idol, our God can deliver us, but even if He doesn't we will NOT BOW DOWN! ... that's trust.

How in the world could Abraham do this?

The answer is back in verse 5.

"Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

Abraham was going to offer his son as a sacrifice and at the same time he was fully expecting Isaac to come back home with him.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸ it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." ¹⁹ He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Heb. 11:17-19)

So Abraham went to the mountain and built an altar to sacrifice his son ...

... he lifted his knife to do the deed...

And then the voice: *Abraham ...do not lay your hand on the boy....*and we all exhale. It is an unbelievably emotional moment.

God will be first

God Should be trusted

3. God Will PROVIDE

¹³ 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.

So, God tells Abraham to do sacrifice his son and then He tells Abraham not do to it.

What's the point of all of this?

TRUTH: Be willing is often as important as doing.

You may not have to give everything to the cause of Christ, but you must be willing.

You may not have to leave the comfort of home and go the mission field, but you have to be willing.

God has a wonderful plan for your life ... and if you will follow God's plan for your life, God will provide.

Ninety per cent of the knowing of the will of God for your life consists in be willing to do it even before you know what it is.

We are living in crucial days and I believe that God may ask more of us, than He has before in our lifetime.

... I have not been able to get away from the prayer request the pastor in Afghanistan gave

... “Pray that the gospel will not be restrained.”

He was saying, nothing not even our lives are as important as the gospel.

Jesus is worth living for and worth dying for!

God asked Abraham for his son ... what is it God is asking you for?

Years ago 5 missionaries put their lives on the line in order to take the gospel to a tribe of people that never heard of Jesus.

There is a book written about it and they even made a movie “Through Gates of Splendor” written by Elizabeth Elliot the wife of one of the missionaries.

January 2, 1956 was the day that 29-year-old Jim Elliot had waited for most of his life.

He jumped out of bed, dressed as quickly as he could, and got ready for the short flight over the thick Ecuador jungle.

Three years of jungle ministry and many hours of planning and praying had led Jim to this day.

Within hours, he and four other missionaries would be setting up camp in the territory of a Indian tribe known as the Aucas (Ow-cuz).

In the past, the Aucas had been known to kill outsiders who ventured into their area.

Even though it was dangerous, Jim Elliot had no doubt God wanted him to tell the Aucas about Jesus.

Jim and his missionary partner, Pete Fleming, had already spent three years ministering to the Quichua (Kee-chew-wah) Indians, many of whom had come to Christ.

Jim then began to feel it was time to go to the Aucas and now tell them about Jesus.

In the past the Aucas (Ow-cuz) tribe had killed several workers from an oil company drilling site near their territory forcing the company to close the site.

The only way to stop the Aucas from killing was to tell them about Jesus Christ.

So, Jim and the four other Ecuador missionaries began to pray and plan a way to reach them.

Nate Saint, a missionary supply pilot, came up with a way to lower a bucket filled with supplies to the Aucas Indians on the ground without landing.

He thought this would be a perfect way to win their trust.

They began dropping gifts and using an amplifier to communicate friendly Auca phrases.

After some months, the Aucas even sent a gift back up in the bucket to the plane.

To Jim and the other missionaries this seemed to signal that it was time to meet the Aucas face to face.

One day while flying over the region Nate Saint spotted a beach that looked long enough to land the plane on.

The plan was to land there and then build a tree house to stay in until friendly contact could be made.

After getting there Nate Saint then flew over the Auca village and called for the Aucas to come to the beach.

After four days, an Auca man and two women appeared.

Since the missionaries only knew a few Auca phrases it was not easy to communicate with them.

But they shared a meal and Nate took the man up for a flight in the plane.

To the missionaries it seemed to go well so they asked the Aucas to bring others the next time.

For two days, the missionaries waited for other Aucas to return.

Finally, on day six, two Auca women walked out of the jungle.

Jim and Pete excitedly jumped in the river and waded over to them.

However, as they got closer, these women did not appear friendly.

Jim and Pete immediately heard a terrifying cry behind them.

As they turned, they saw a group of Auca warriors with their spears raised, ready to throw.

Jim Elliot reached for the gun in his pocket, but he couldn't use it.

Each of the missionaries had promised they would not kill an Auca Indian to save their own lives ... because the Indians did not know Jesus.

Within seconds, the Auca warriors threw their spears, killing all the missionaries: Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming and Jim Elliot.

Late in the afternoon of Sunday, January 8, Elisabeth Elliot, Jim's wife, waited by the two-way radio to hear Nate Saint and his wife discuss how things had gone that day.

... But there was no call.

... As evening turned to night, the wives grew worried.

... They knew the news was not good.

The next morning another missionary pilot flew over the beach to look for the men and saw the badly damaged plane on the beach.

News quickly spread around the world about the five missing missionaries.

A United States search team went to the beach, found the missionaries' bodies, and buried them.

... But this is not where the story ends.

In less than two years Elisabeth Elliot, her daughter Valerie, and Rachel Saint (Nate's sister) moved to the Auca village.

Many Aucas became Christians, and they are now a friendly tribe.

Missionaries, including Nate Saint's son and his family, still live among the Aucas today.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. – Jim Elliot