

**Genesis 22: 9-19; “Abraham’s Faith Rewarded”, Sermon # 65 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 2nd, 2006,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

God gave Abraham tests in regard to his faith at certain stages of his life after He called him. This was the greatest and most difficult test of his faith; to put the Word of God revealed to him, and his love for God Himself, above his love for his son Isaac who was the child of promise. You and I as Christians will be called to do the same thing at certain critical times of God’s choosing. Perhaps it will not be as dramatic as this test of Abraham’s, but there will be occasions of God’s providential ordering when a choice will plainly be set before you.

And the choice will be between God’s plainly declared will which has been revealed to you in His Word, and your love for someone or something, that is very precious to you. What will you do at that time? And what will God do in response? This is what we want to think about this morning. Abraham passed the test that God set before him. He did obey the command which seemed cruel. He did rise up early in his obedience.

He did go to the place that God commanded him. He did split the wood and bind his son on the altar. And he did it by faith working through love. These graces were working so strongly in him, that even his son Isaac, who was to be the sacrificial victim, was convinced to submit to all that his father was doing to him. As a result of passing this test God rewarded Abraham’s obedience with many blessings. He will do the same for you, if you are faithful to obey God’s word.

The obedience of faith does not merit the favor and blessing of God, but it will be rewarded greatly. It will be rewarded, even as God thinks best. “All who come to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him,” it says in Hebrews 11: 6. So our question this morning is this – What were the rewards of Abraham’s obedience? And will they be your rewards as well?

These rewards of Abraham’s obedient faith are described for us in an immediate sense, and in a long term sense, and so this is how we will develop the sermon this morning.

1st – Let’s look at the rewards which came to Abraham in the immediate sense. (verses 11-14)

Sometimes when you obey the Lord in a definite and resolute way, God will reward you in an immediate sense. This was the case here. “The Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’” “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” So, God’s ability to determine whether Abraham would be obedient, only took a moment of time in this case. It was the moment that Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Oh what anguish it must have brought to Abraham’s loving heart, to have split the wood that he would lay Isaac on. What sadness; to bind him to that wood and then to think of what he must now do. But when we read the commentary on these actions which is found in Hebrews 11: 19 we understand a great deal more about Abraham’s holy reasoning. We find what it was that gave him the strength to reach for the knife. It says there: “He concluded that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him back in a figurative sense.”

This was what God rewarded. It was this kind of reasoning that built Abraham’s faith and his moral courage. Abraham knew and believed that God could not lie. He knew that He would fulfill all of His promises to him. He was very certain that God, having given him these great promises, which all centered on Isaac, and which would be fulfilled in his being the child of promise, would only be fulfilled by his being able to live his life to God. He believed that God would not ask for Isaac’s death as a sacrificial offering, without raising him up again.

So, having this kind of faith, Abraham received him back again. This was the reward of his faith. Let me ask now – Have you come to understand that this is so, in regard to your life, my friend? Sometimes God will test you with regard to your loved ones. He is seeking to know and to

prove to Himself, and to you, what you are hoping to get out of this life. You must ask yourself: Is my way really God's way when I think about how I going to try to attain it, or obtain what I am seeking? Faith will see that God wants to be a part of those decisions that you are making. And if you are wise, you will want to give God what He is asking for, even when it is most precious to yourself.

God will reward such faith. Jesus says so, in Mark 10: 28-31 – “Then Peter began to say to Jesus, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’” “So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions – and in the age to come, eternal life.’” “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” You see, Peter thought that he had suffered the loss of all things. And yet, really, he was gaining it all back, a hundred times over.

The Lord had given Abraham back his Isaac. How full of joy he must have been, to cut the cords that he had bound Isaac with. To have take him up off the wood that would have become his death bed, and say to him – My son, I have you back now! Oh how I love you, my son! But I want you to see that he had passed the test by his showing greater love to God. It was the same kind of test that Jesus later gave to his disciples in Matthew 10: 37-39. He said to them at that time: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” “And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

The reward of Abraham's obedience was that he received his son back. But in receiving him back, he found his own life again. And he also had the reward of learning the meaning of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ in an immediate sense. Because he had been obedient by faith in what God would do for him. God providentially ordered that a ram would be caught by its horns in a thicket behind him. He came to know the reality of what God would do for him and for Isaac in order to provide the atoning sacrifice for both of them.

So, rather than his being able to glory in himself, or in Isaac, that they had made the sacrifice, Abraham was happy and thankful to be able to go to that bush and lay hold of the ram, and offer it up in the place of Isaac. Isaac was no doubt happy to be released. The reward of faith is, that when we believe the gospel, we are able to lay hold on the Savior, our Lord Jesus, and find that God will accept us. He does give us the forgiveness of our sins, because He did not withhold his own dearly beloved Son.

Abraham took the ram, and he offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. Abraham had been willing to offer up Isaac, and yet he did not have to go through with it. Isaac had been willing to die at his father's hand, and yet he did not undergo the suffering of death in this way. God the Father did go through with it, by the offering up His Son. Jesus Christ did go to cross, and was willingly made a sacrifice.

Even so, some of us here today may need to be reminded, that although there are many sacrifices to be made in living the Christian life, that each sacrifice that we make is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We make all of our sacrifices based upon the grace that is brought to us through Him. This is the reward of faith, by the way. The more that we give to God, by faith, and the more that we are able to work and labor for Him, the more that we realize that it is all something that God has brought about, on the basis of the death of His Son.

Sometimes when we do something for God, or sacrifice something for His cause and His kingdom, we think that we are doing it all ourselves. If we know the truth, it is actually God's grace at work in us. We do all that we do, through Christ. Even Abraham's passing this test was based upon the grace of God at work in him. So, let us ask ourselves whether we are really thankful and happy, that Christ has been offered up by the Father? And our Lord bids us to lay hold of Him for

the grace and strength to do what is right. We need this grace as much as we needed grace for the forgiveness of our sins.

How much do you realize the blessed truth of Jesus substituting Himself for you on the cross? How much do you realize that it is His grace that enables you to begin to sacrifice and to serve Your Lord? “What do you have that you did not receive?” “Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” We really begin to understand, don’t we, when we look at Jesus taking the place of sinners on the cross. He was as the ram caught in the thicket, for us and for our loved ones.

The reward of your faith is in your coming to learn this, and to understand where the strength comes to do service for God. This is what Abraham received in an immediate sense. He learned that the Lord will provide, Jehovah-Jireh. He saw and he understood that in the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided. When he passed the test of doing what the Lord had commanded him, he was richly rewarded with the knowledge that it would be seen by him, and others, that God had provided atonement for him.

God had supplied the very thing that he needed. The very thing that he needed was the very thing he lacked, until God gave it to him. In the Mount of the Lord it was provided. The same is true for us if we will believe and abide in the shadow of Christ’s cross.

2nd – Let’s look at the rewards which came to Abraham long term as a result of his passing this test. (verses 15-18)

“Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.” “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Now it is always a very significant thing when God takes an oath to do something; most especially, is it significant here. First of all, God is saying that He most certainly would be faithful to multiply Abraham’s physical descendants through Isaac. This would most certainly come to pass. But the greater blessing would most surely come to those who were of the same faith as Abraham; those who obeyed God in this way we are speaking of, now. It is the way of gospel obedience. It is the way of patient waiting for the promises to be fulfilled by God in our lives.

There are many things that we cannot bring about in our lives in regard to the promises of God. And this is because His purposes are greater and higher than our conception of them. And He has designed your life in such a way that only He can bring about what He has promised. That is why it will be important for you to focus on His commands to you, even as Abraham did. Abraham’s keeping the command by faith brought blessings, not only to himself, but to countless millions of people besides.

God would defeat all their spiritual enemies through Jesus Christ the promised Seed. And in Jesus Christ, all the nations of the earth would be blessed, because Abraham obeyed God’s voice. Truly it is amazing how God can multiply the effects of your obedience, to become the basis of great blessings coming to others, on account of it. But as I said before, your obedience being blessed by God to have multiplied effects for good in the lives of others, is based upon the obedience of Jesus Christ. It was because of His obedience and His sacrifice that you were blessed by God; both to your salvation and to your growth in grace, and usefulness to God.

Turn with me to Hebrews 6: 13. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’”

“And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” “For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.” “Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel,

confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

What God designed through the obedience of Abraham was, there at that time, to swear an oath that He would bless all of His elect people, all those who are called the heirs of salvation, here, through Jesus Christ who is the promised Seed of Abraham. This oath that God took was the basis of all consolation and hope being given to Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed because of his obedience. And it will be the same also, for all of us who believe in Him.

All true consolation and hope comes from your continuing to trust and rest in the promise of God to you, that through the finished work of Jesus Christ, and His ongoing intercession, He will bring you through all of your trials and testings, to the place where you will be able to bring glory to God by the way that you live. He it is whose grace will save you. And He will teach you and help you to come to the place where you can pass the test that He Himself brings. Your salvation rests upon the oath of God. And it will be secured by all that God will do for you through the grace of Jesus Christ.

The faith of Abraham was a diligent and a persevering faith in the promises of God while he attempted to keep God’s commandments. God would have each believer diligently pursue obedience to his commands, even as Abraham did. He is, as it says earlier in Hebrews 6, “not so unjust as to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.”

Those apostles who wrote the book of Hebrews desired that each believer would show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you will not become sluggish, but become an imitator of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise. I am quite sure that each of us can learn to stir ourselves up to this, if we will be diligent in cultivating a sincere faith in our service to Christ. If you will love the brethren and learn to minister to them, then you also will receive rich blessings and rewards from God. And you will pass the tests that He brings to you.