

Hall of Faith: Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac

Hebrews 11:17-19

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 12, 2023

Well, before we get started this morning, I just want to say hello. Feel like I haven't seen you guys in a while. Two weeks ago we had the snowstorm and had to cancel our morning service. And then the week after that we had a pastor swap, where I went to Prairie Chapel; Prairie Chapel's pastor, Mike Chalmers came here to speak to you. And just a little update about what I told them. I said, "You know, in the life of our church, we've kind of had three phases of Grace Fellowship, we've had pre COVID, and then COVID or the crazy times, and then post COVID, sort of the phases." I think it's been like everybody in British Columbia, and post COVID, we've seen a lot of growth and new faces in our congregation, which has been very encouraging for us.

And in fact, I think our congregation has kind of mirrored of the life of Chilliwack. Chilliwack is traditionally very much a religious town, people came from a church background and the community, and lately a lot of folks have come in who have not come from that kind of world, they've gotten saved from a life that is not church based. And it's been a wonderful opportunity to see the gospel reach both people. In fact, I got a story that I think maybe illustrates this very well. About a month ago, my family went to a toy store downtown, and it was one of those days that was very, very cold. And you remember that. And so when we came out of the toy store, my first job was to find the van; I was freezing. And I started walking toward it. And I heard someone saying, "Kevin, Kevin, Kevin" off to my side, and I couldn't quite see what was going on, but I turned around. Eventually, I saw my wife walking back towards a homeless man who was standing, I didn't know he was homeless at the time, found out later, homeless man who was standing over another one who was lying prostrate on the ground and looked like he was dead. And the man who was standing up was taking his foot and pressing it on his chest, trying to wake him up from a coma. He was high on drugs, the guy who was standing up and didn't know what he was doing really. My wife proceeded to do CPR, and we called the ambulance. We found out that he was still breathing, they asked him on the on the 911 call, they asked Katie to put her ear next to his mouth to see if any air was coming out, and it was. But it shook us up. And as we were going to the car, we talked about it as a family that people die. And not only do people die, but it's the church's job to help them die. Amen? I mean, what are we here for? We're not just here for the religious people, now we are here for them. We're here for the people that grew up in church, absolutely; the gospel is for them, but the gospel is for that guy in the street too. In fact, when I was walking away, I really felt like the parable of the Good Samaritan, you know, the Levite walks by, and the priest walks by and he'll do anything. And I just say that to tell you that my prayer for our church is that we reach both people and share the gospel with both parties. And I think we're doing that; I just encourage you to excel still more.

And this morning, I want to talk to you about something that's not really related to that. But I think it's very important, because we're continuing our study the book of Hebrews, and we're coming to a part of the book where the author gives us a history lesson, which is unusual. If you've been with us for a while

in our studies in this book, you'll know that so far, the author has been focusing mainly on the issue of doctrine in the book, and theology and that type of thing. But when it comes to Hebrews chapter 11, do you want to turn there in your Bibles? He shifts gears for a moment in order to take us back in time. So he could show us how the people of Israel were saved back then, and that is by faith. He takes us on a journey to the past to tell you how they came to know the Lord back then in Old Testament times; and that is by trusting in God just like you do.

So far, He's given us five examples of that. He's talked to us about the story of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah. But this morning, he gives us a story of one more person, and that's Isaac. Now specifically, he tells you about the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac because it's the greatest demonstration of faith in the Old Testament. Nothing really compares to it in that part of the Bible. And in fact, to introduce it to you, I want to ask you to forgive me, I told you to turn to Hebrews, keep your finger in Hebrews and turn to the book of Genesis. We're gonna look at both passages this morning. But if you've already opened up to Hebrews, just keep your marker there and turn to Genesis 22. Because we're going to read this story in its entirety, so you can hear it all at once. Because it says this in Genesis 22. It says,

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 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." 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. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 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 took the wood would have 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. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire in the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

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 stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 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." 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.

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."

Then the angel of the LORD called Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and you've not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed 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." And so Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba

We'll stop the reading there. As you read that, I just want to point out to you that that is one of the strangest stories in the Bible. It really makes you stop and think. Because God tells Abraham to kill his son here, and he does it, doesn't he? At least he prepares to. He tells him to sacrifice his only child of the promise on the altar, and he does it without hesitation. Which is the only time when God commands something like this in Scripture, by the way. It's the only time when He orders someone to do a human sacrifice. It's also the only instance when He tells someone to kill their child when they don't deserve it. There were moments in the Old Testament when God told the Jews to kill their children if they did deserve it, and they broke the law and they sinned against God and that type of thing. But that's not the case here. Isaac didn't do anything wrong. Which also makes this the only time when the Lord directs someone to commit manslaughter, or the act of slaying someone for no reason, because Abraham had no motive for this action.

Which makes you wonder, "Why?" I don't know about you, but I read this, and my first question is what's going on here? Why would the Lord command His servant to act this way? And the answer is found in verse one, if you look back in your Bibles, when it says that the Lord did this in order to test Abraham. Now the word for test is the Hebrew word *nasa*, which means to test or try or prove something, because the Lord wanted to prove if Abraham still loved Him. And He wanted to see if he still believed in Him after all these years. Because if you remember, this is what Abraham and Sarah wanted. They wanted a child. And this is what they asked for, they asked for someone to carry on their legacy and their family name; and the Lord gave it to them, so now He wanted to know if they still wanted Him now because they had a baby. You guys know some people lose their mind when they get a baby. And God wanted to see "Are you still going to call on Me now Abraham?" And Abraham passed the test, but it still doesn't answer the question, "Why couldn't God do this another way? Why did he have to test him like this? What's the point of this? And the answer is we don't know all these answers. The Bible doesn't say. This is just what He did.

But to give you some background about this, if you look in verse one, it highlights the difficulty of this request when it says God told Abraham to "Take now your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac." In other words, He doesn't just call him Isaac. He doesn't just call him "your son." He calls him "your

only son, your only son whom you love, Isaac," in order to say, this is what I want you to do to the child that you care about more than anything else in the world, Abraham, I want you to take him to the mountain and kill him.

When he mentions the mountain here in verse two, if you notice the name of that mountain is anonymous. We don't know exactly where it was, but it's in the land of Moriah it says, which is located on the southern part of Israel in a place that's now called Jerusalem. And the significance to that is, if you look in your Bibles, chapter 11:33, it says that Abraham was staying in the region of Beersheba at this time, which was about 45 miles away, which shows you that this took Abraham a long time to get there. This was not a quick trip, which would have given him plenty of time to worry and think, and ask himself, "Do I really want to do this? Is this really worth it? Am I making a mistake?" The passage also says it took him three days to get there. That's a long time when you're thinking about doing something like this. Verse two also says once he arrived, the problems didn't stop because God told him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. In other words, don't just sacrifice him, but burn him. And don't just offer him up, but I want you to do it in a specific way by incinerating his remains, until there's nothing left, which was also very time consuming thing because this would have required Abraham to go to the top of the mountain, collect the wood, build an altar, arrange it in a certain way, then kill the boy, light him on fire and let the fire consumed. Which would have been painful, Abraham would have done that all himself.

Some people have wondered if Isaac helped him in this, and the fact is that he did. If you look in verse six, it says Abraham took some of the wood and laid it on his son. And that doesn't mean at that point, he laid it on him on the altar, it means he gave it to him to carry because Isaac was old enough to carry wood at this time; he wasn't a baby. Verse seven says the boy was also mature enough to talk to his dad and communicate with him. The same verse says he could process what was going on because Isaac said, "Where's the lamb?", which means he knew they're about to kill something. He has seen Abraham make a sacrifice before; he just didn't know it was going to be him.

And in the midst of all this, when he finds out, the beauty of the story, is that verse 13, says the Lord provided a lamb for Abraham to slaughter instead. Which means He didn't revoke the commandment. He didn't make stop Abraham from killing anything, he just had him kill an animal instead, which is a beautiful picture of the gospel because it reminds us of just as our Heavenly Father should have killed us and put us to death, He didn't because he provided a substitute in the form of Christ. But the point in this and in the mind of the author of Hebrews is that Abraham did this because he had faith. And the reason he acted this way, and lived through with all of this and sacrificed his son and gave him up for dead is because He trusted in God, even when he didn't understand what was going on.

You can just imagine the questions that would have swirled around and Abraham's head as you've been doing this. They would have been endless, but he did it because he had confidence in God, which takes us back to the book of Hebrews. So if you want to turn there in your Bibles, because this is what the author is talking about next in the hall of faith, because Hebrews 11:17 says this, it says, "By faith

Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.” Now this is one of the many verses in this chapter that you read, and you pass over quickly because you don't quite wrap your mind around what it's saying. But you need to pause for a moment and understand what he's communicating to you. Because it means a by faith, God told Abraham to kill his son and he did it, or he prepared to do it. He was ready. The Lord commanded him to give up his most sacred thing on earth, and he obeyed because he trusted God. He had confidence in Him. He knew that God was worth it. Verse 17 also says he did this to his only begotten Son, which highlights the seriousness of this because it's not like Abraham had two sons of the promise when he gave up Isaac. And it's not like he had 10 kids to pick from to fulfill God's covenant when he laid him on the altar. He didn't. He had one son, one child, one little boy to do all that, and that was it. But he gave him because verse 19 says, “He considered that God is able to raise people from the dead.” Now that's the kicker because it shows you how great Abraham has faith was. Because it means that as he did this Abraham reasoned this way in his mind on that 45 mile journey from Beersheba to Mariah. He said, “If Isaac is the child of the promise, and God told me to kill him, the only way I can put all this together is to realize that after I do it, the Lord will bring the boy back from the dead.” That's some kind of faith, isn't it? God will do a miracle. He'll resurrect him.

I don't know about you, but when I read this, it blows me away. Because this is a reminder that when you have faith in God like this, it has no limitations. There's no boundaries to it. When you believe in God the way you're supposed to, you believe He can do anything. And when you trust in Him this way, you trust in Him all the way. Nothing is too hard for Him. It doesn't matter what it is, not even a resurrection. I can't think of anything harder than raising someone from the dead. And I can't think of anything more difficult than raising my own child from the dead once I slay him, and that's what Abraham believed. One pastor said this way, “When you look at God like this, you realize you shouldn't just make small requests of Him, you should make big requests, because He's a big God, and He can handle it.” Abraham asked God to do something huge here; you can't find anything greater. Because he believed our God is in the heavens, and He does what He pleases. So if He wants to raise Isaac, He can raise Isaac; nothing's gonna stop Him.

I mention that because sometimes I think we make the issue of faith harder than that. We all have a tendency to look at God and put Him in a box and say, “I think God can do this and this and this. But I don't think He can do that, and that and that.” But the fact is, we shouldn't act that way. Our Lord is able to do far beyond anything we can ask or imagine.

In fact, when it says that Abraham concluded God is able to do this, I looked it up out of curiosity some time ago. And I discovered the Bible says God is able to do all kinds of things. It said, He's able to make all grace abound to you. And He's able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we asked or think. It says, He's able to keep you from stumbling, and He's able to come to your aid, and He's able to build you up and give you an inheritance and keep all that you've committed to Him until that day. But the point is, all of that doesn't matter unless you believe it. You have to have faith, which is what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at three insights into Abraham sacrifice of Isaac. So if you're

taking notes, this is our outline for today, but in Hebrews 11, in these verses, we're going to look at three insights into Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. And then I'm going to give you some closing thoughts on this at the end. So we'll take a few moments to review it afterwards.

But the first one is this Abraham sacrifice Isaac, as a result of being tested. We've already said a few words about this, but we need to say more because the passage does that. But the first insight into Abraham sacrifice of Isaac, is that he sacrificed his son as a result of being tested, which means he did it as an act of obedience. Abraham did this because the Lord told him to.

And as you come to verse 17, you can tell this is a few verses into the chapter, so it might be good to back up a little bit to review what the author has been saying. But earlier in verse one of chapter 11, it says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen." And the reason the author says that is because this is the theme of the chapter, and that is that faith is a conviction in things that are invisible. Can't see God, can't see heaven, can't see eternity, but you know it's there because you have faith. That's the idea. And then verse two says, "For by it the men of old gained approval, and that means this is how the men from the Old Covenant were saved. They did it by faith and trust in God like you do. This book is written to the Jews, or the Hebrew people from the Old Covenant who were coming into the New Covenant as they trusted in Christ. And so he says this is what your ancestors were saved by. By grace. Then verse three, it says, "By faith we understand the worlds were prepared by the word of God," because that's where faith begins. It starts at the beginning with creation, and then after saying that the author starts listing various people like we've been talking about these past couple months. He talks about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and now we come to a new name in this chapter, and that's the name Isaac.

And to be clear, this story is about Abraham and what he did; so Isaac is kind of a secondary figure here; but it would help to say a little bit about him because this is the first time his name appears. Because the name Isaac means laughter. As we saw when we looked at the faith of Sarah, the name Isaac is a term that was given to her and Abraham, because when the boy was born, both of them laughed at God. They did it at separate times, but they did that not in a joyful way, but in a scornful way. Because they didn't believe it anymore. They didn't believe God was gonna give them a son, so the Lord told him, "Okay, when the boy comes, I want you to name him laughter as a memento of that event, so that every time his name comes up, it would remind you not to doubt Me again." The name Isaac was also called laughter because he brought so much joy to his family. I mean, it's just kind of a dual purpose here for the name. But when you do a survey of his life, you find Isaac is an interesting character in the Bible because he's the first full blooded Jew in history. And what I mean is that Abraham and Sarah were not Jewish originally. The Bible tells us they were Chaldeans, they were from the land of Ur, which means they were Gentiles. So they would have walked like Gentiles and talked like Gentiles, and grown up in a Gentile home, but not Isaac. He was different. He grew up in a very unique environment. And we might add that he was the first child in the Bible to be born of a miracle that I'm aware of anyway. Genesis 17 tells us that Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90 at the time of his birth, and she was past the

ability to conceive. Her body had already gone through that stage of life, so the child was formed supernaturally. The Lord reached down into time and space and opened up Sarah's womb in order for him to come. He was also one of the first men to have his birth prophesied about. Genesis 12 says that the Lord told Abraham, He would make a great nation out of him. And it's not until Genesis 21 that Isaac is born, 25 years later.

And what did Abraham do the entire time? He waited. And how did he act for those 25 years before the birth occurred? Well, he did the only he could do, he prayed. And he asked the Lord, "Is this when he will come? Is this the day the child will appear for us?" which is what makes verse 17 so shocking, because if you read it again, after experiencing all of that, and putting this background together, it says, "By faith Abraham when he was tested, offered up Isaac." Think about what that means for a moment. That means that after Abraham waited and waited and waited for 25 years and prayed and prayed and prayed for a quarter of a century, and finally got him through a miracle, this is what he did to the boy, he agreed to kill him. That's shocking, isn't it? How many of you parents in this room would kill your child if you were told to? Nobody. How many of you would do it if you waited 25 years for him?

And just to make some observations about this verse, but when it says that by faith, Abraham did this, that means he didn't do it on the basis of logic, he did it on the basis of faith. Abraham didn't offer up Isaac, because it made sense to him, because he had all the answers, because he could comprehend what was going on. Because the whole thing probably would have seemed crazy to him, but he did it because he believed in God and trusted His word. And that's it. That's the whole motivation. The passage also tells us that he did it when he was tested. And the way this is worded is important here, because the word "test" in Greek is continuous to demonstrate that Abraham was tested over and over and over again as he offered him. And he was challenged repeatedly because it was a prolonged experience. I just told you it was a 45-mile journey from Beersheba to Moriah. And Genesis 22 says it took him three days to get there. It's not like the Lord gave him the command, and then the next moment, he just goes up the mountain and does it. So the entire time he's making his journey, he had to be wondering, "Why is God doing this?" And all throughout the trip, he had to ask himself, you know, "Am I making the right decision here?" At least it would have crossed his mind. And as he did that, the verse says he came to the point where he offered the child up. Now the way that's worded makes it sound like he went through with it because that verb is in the past tense. It's phrased in such a way that it appears like he killed Isaac even though he didn't because the Lord stopped Him. But the author says it this way because in the mind of Abraham, he might as well have. And as far as he was concerned, he had already settled in his heart to do it. When he went up on the mountain, this was not a symbolic gesture to him; he was really gonna kill the child. Because he was being obedient to the command of God.

And we didn't get a chance to talk about this earlier. But when you study the story of Abraham sacrifice of Isaac, it really strikes you how obedient Abraham was. I mean, he didn't even hesitate to follow God's will. Because Genesis 22:2 says that the Lord called out to Abraham and 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."

And the next verse says Abraham rose early in the morning, and he did it. It doesn't say that he arose late in the morning, it doesn't say that he went in the afternoon, it doesn't tell us that he went in the evening after arguing with God about it for six hours, it says, nope, the first chance he got, he did it immediately. Delayed obedience is not obedience. And postponed submission is not submission. When God tells you to do something, He wants you to do it now. And that's what Abraham did. That passage in Genesis also says that Abraham saddled his donkey, and that's kind of a touching scene there because it means that he didn't make a slave do that. That was a slave's job in that culture. If you were a wealthy person, like Abraham was, and you were going to saddle a beast to go for a journey, you didn't do that. That was beneath you. This passage says Abraham acted that way, because he wanted to show that he was taking full responsibility for this. He wasn't handing it off to anybody. And the passage also says that he didn't talk as he did so. After the Lord gave the command, Abraham stayed silent through the whole thing until he came within eyesight of the mountain, because as far as he was concerned, after God had spoken, there wasn't anything else to say. But the point is that Abraham's obedience, was complete. He didn't hold anything back. God told him, and he did it, which is a convicting thought, isn't it?

The whole story humbles you, because I don't know about you, but when the Lord tells a lot of us to do something, we don't always act like this. Sometimes we want to procrastinate. And when the Lord gives us a command, we want to put it off because we're so distracted with other things. In fact, I would say this is one of the biggest problems in the church today in the 21st century. And that is that so many of us know what the Bible says, we just don't do it. And we understand what the Lord is telling us to do in Scripture, we just don't obey because we'd rather do something else. The Lord tells us to pray, we don't pray. He tells us to read Scripture, we don't read scripture. He tells us to put off the old man, put on the new man, we don't do those things. Which is why we get into so much trouble. Abraham's life is a reminder, that really, at the end of the day, the Lord's only asking you to do one thing, and that is to obey Him. He just wants you to read His Word and apply it. Everything else is secondary to that.

You know, I read one commentator this week who put it this way. He said, "It wasn't too long before this, that God told Abraham's nephew Lot to leave Sodom and Gomorrah." You remember that story and don't look back? Which Lot did; he did finally leave, and he didn't look back, but his wife did. And what happened to her, she was turned into a pillar of salt. That wasn't too long before this, which might have been ringing in Abraham's ears as he did all this because it reminded him that this is what happens when you don't obey God, it ruins your life, turns you into salt. So he decided at this point, I'm not going to do that here. I'm going to obey right away.

Which brings us to another insight into the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, and that is that by faith Abraham believed God was able to raise the dead. Second insight into the story of Abraham sacrifice of Isaac, is that by faith Abraham did this because he believed God was able to resurrect his son. Which means that this is why Abraham took such a drastic step of obedience, and that is because he believed God could do anything including a miracle.

And if you read this in verse 17, it goes on to say like this, it says,

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,

Now, before we get into the end of that, where it talks about raising Isaac from the dead, there's a few things we need to mention first because they shed some insight into what's happening here. For example, this phrase "that he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son." It's important, because it shows you the gravity of what Abraham did. This is what was at stake with his sacrifice because it means Abraham did not just sacrifice his son as he did this, he sacrificed his begotten son. And he didn't just offer up his child, but he offered God the only one that he had, or the only one of the promise because there was no second option here. I told you earlier, it's not as if Abraham had 10 children of the covenant when he sacrificed Isaac, he had one, which is what made this so much more difficult. So if he lost Isaac, he lost everything. In fact, if you look in your Bibles, this phrase "only begotten son," it's one word in Greek which is *monogenes*. It's a compound word from *mono* only in Genesis offspring, it means your only offspring or your sole surviving heir. It's a special word in the Bible, because it's a term that was used to refer to Jesus in John 3:16 when it said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son [*monogenes*], so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." And that's an interesting use of the word because it shows you what God did at the cross, He sacrificed everything. He gave us His only child. And the idea here is that Abraham did the same thing. Now, to be fair, or to be clear, those two verses aren't saying the sacrifice was comparable because what God gave was so much greater than what Abraham gave. In fact, Abraham didn't even go through with a sacrifice; he didn't finish it. God stopped him. But God did when He gave Jesus at the cross, I just bring it up to say the Bible uses the same word in those passages.

And another phrase to look at here is the statement that "It was he to whom it was said, in Isaac shall your descendants be called." Now that statement is in quotation marks in your Bibles because it's a reference to Genesis 17 when the Lord changes Abraham's name from Abram to Abraham, to tell him that you will be the father of a multitude. And in that story, Abraham says, "Thank You, Lord, oh, that Ishmael might live before you." In other words, "God, when you fulfill this promise to me, will you start with my son, Ishmael because he's already born? He's already here." And God says, "No. In Isaac," this is the quote here "in Isaac your descendants shall be called," which is what made this event all the more surprising when the Lord told Abraham to kill him. Because again, it makes you wonder why. If Abraham killed Isaac, it seems like he would wipe away any hope of ever having the covenant fulfilled, but the passage says that Abraham did it anyway. Because verse 19 here in Hebrews says, "He considered that God is able to raise people from the dead." Which means that Abraham offered Isaac because he reflected on it, and he gave it some thought, and here was the conclusion he came to at the

end of the day, and that is that if God wants to give me my descendants through Isaac after I kill him, then God will do it because He will resurrect him from the dead.

Remember, there's no limitations with God. We have faith in Him; nothing is too hard for Him. So if He wants to do a miracle, He can do a miracle, nothing can stop Him. And that's what's going on in Abraham's mindset. And to be honest, the book of Genesis doesn't say a lot about this. Because you don't read in Genesis 22 that Abraham said anything about a resurrection there, but there is a statement that he makes that's very telling here in Genesis 22:5-6 because it says that once they arrived at the mountain, Abraham said to the young men who were with him, "Stay here with the and I and the lad will go over there and return to you." Think about that for a moment. He's about to go up on the mountain and kill his boy, and he says, "We'll return." Not just Abraham, but Abraham and Isaac, "we," both of us. Which shows you that Abraham believed If that before he went up, he was going to get in his mind, he was going to go to the mountain, slay the boy, burn him, and then they're both gonna come back down.

Now when I read this, you know, the whole story strikes a chord with me because I still have kids at home. And I have two little boys, so I can try to put my mind into what's going on in his heart as he did this. But even when I do that, I have a hard time. I mean the thought of giving up your son like this is just too much for me. There's nothing more precious to you than your children, right? I don't care who you are. We've had a number of young families give birth to little kids lately, and I've had the privilege of visiting some of them. And every time I do that, it makes me laugh because they say the silliest things to their kid, don't they? Every parent does. They're so overwhelmed with joy that they let the child play with the car keys. And they say, "Hey, do you want that? You want a car? I got two of them. I don't like the red one anyway; you can have it." What's the kid going to do with a car? That's just silly, right? But they love them so much, they can't help themselves. Or they say, "How do you feel?" We're in the hospital, you need a kidney. I got two kidneys; we can just go around the corner, I can hand you one of those. If you need money, you can have money. You need clothes, you can have clothes. If you want books you can't have the books, we have to draw the line somewhere. Keep your peanut butter cheesy filled hands out of my library." But the point is that if God would say to that parent, "I want your child," they would say, "No. You can't have it. It's just not gonna happen God." Abraham did. He let Him have Isaac because he said, "Even if I kill him that won't stop God. I know the one who's speaking to me, I understand His character. I know His nature, and God will bring him back to me."

Abraham would have agreed with one of the reformers who said this, he said, "I've held many things in my hands, and I've lost them all. But whatever I've placed in God's hands, that I still possess." Because this is what Abraham does. He takes Isaac and he puts him in God's hands. And he picks up his child and he hands them over to Him because he knew God would take better care of him than he ever could.

The Jews actually tell the story of the time someone asked Abraham about this event years later. And they said, "Abraham, what was going through your mind as you were about to lose Isaac." And

Abraham said, "I never thought I would lose him. I was just giving him to God for safekeeping. I knew He would give him back again." When you have faith, you realize that's what God does. He never loses anything you give Him.

And it leads you into another insight into this story of Abraham sacrifice. And that is that after offering up Isaac, Abraham received him back as a type. And we're just getting these from the text here, but the third insight is that after offering up Isaac, Abraham received him back as a type, which means that even though Abraham did not literally kill the boy, he symbolically did. In his mind, he was ready to. And he also symbolically received him back again. And if you read in verse 19, this is kind of a deep thing we'll talk about here, but it's right from the text. It says, "he considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."

Now, to be honest, we can't say too much about this part of the passage because it's pretty short. It's only about six words in the original Greek, but a key word is the word "type." At the end here, it's a Greek word *parabole*, from which we get the word parable. It's another compound word in the passage from *bolo* to throw and *para* alongside because this is what a parable is. It's something that is thrown alongside of something else to make a comparison. When you read the parables of Jesus in the Bible, you learn that this is what He does. He takes a spiritual thing, and He throws it besides something physical. He takes something that's hard to understand like the kingdom of God, and He puts it into something that's easy to understand like a pearl, or a mustard seed, or a treasure that someone hid in the field. And this is the way the word is used in this passage except the author is not giving you a parable in the kingdom of God; he's giving you a parable of the resurrection. Because even though Isaac didn't die, as far as Abraham was concerned he did; so that on the way back from the land of Moriah, he received him back again as a type of our future resurrection. In order to tell us that just like Isaac was raised from the dead, so we'd be raised from the dead if we put our faith in Jesus Christ. Now again, the book of Genesis is silent about this, because it doesn't say much about Isaac's resurrection. Because this is a part of this passage where the author of Hebrews, through the inspiration of the Spirit, takes you deeper into the mind of Abraham in order to tell you what he was thinking about as he was traveling those 45 miles from Beersheba to Moriah, and walking, walking, walking, and riding, riding and riding alongside Isaac for three days. Because as he was doing that, you can imagine he would be upset. I wouldn't want to be journeying with Abraham for three days like that. I think it'd be a miserable trip. But on the way back, everything changed. It was smiles and laughter and celebration, and he was happy. Why? Because the son who was lost was now returned; Isaac was alive. He didn't harm a hair on his head. How can you, how can you explain that? Abraham would have acted like it was a miracle. In fact, I've often wondered what it would be like to be one of the servants going out with Abraham because if you remember, he didn't tell them much. All he said was "Stay here with the donkey and I and the lad will go and return." But then when he came back, everything was different; his whole demeanor would have been altered. But the idea here in verse 19, is that all of this is explained in the word "type."

If you want to write this down, in theological terms, a type is an Old Testament event that illustrates a New Testament principle. I'll say it again, just in case you're taking notes. But a type is an Old Testament event that illustrates a New Testament principle. Because it takes something from the former part of the Bible, like Isaac and the story of his deliverance, and he uses it to clarify something from the latter part of the Bible, like our resurrection. I think we all understand that when you die, the resurrection doesn't happen yet. And when you pass away, it has not occurred because your soul goes to heaven while your body stays behind to await the time when the Lord will reunite the two at a later stage when the Lord returns, and the trumpet sounds, and we'll be changed in the flash in a twinkling of an eye; and that is what this is referring to here. Because the author tells the story of Isaac serves as an illustration of that event. Because when the resurrection happens, just like it was with Abraham, everything will be different. It will be celebrations, smiles, joy, peace; we'll be rejoicing in the goodness of God.

And again, I can't spend too much time on this because the text doesn't allow it. The author just says Abraham received Isaac back this way, and then he moves on. But before we move on, I want to say a few words about the subject of types. I know this is a term that has caused a lot of confusion throughout the years because it's not found all that often in the Bible. So then anytime it appears, it can create problems, because there's some who read a statement like this, and they take it to mean that since the author of Hebrews makes a type out of this, we can make a type out of other things. And what I'm referring to here is that some people turn to a passage like 1 Samuel 17 when David fights Goliath, and they say, that's a type of me, because that was a story of how I can defeat the giants in my life. Some of you have heard that before. And they go to pick up the five stones, and they talk about what those five stones might mean. Or they refer to another passage like when Peter walks on water, and they say that's a type too because it's a reminder that if I keep my eyes on Jesus, I can walk on water and go over the troubles that bother me. But the problem is that that's not what this is referring to. Which leads me to say you need to be careful with how you handle types. You can't approach it the wrong way.

There are certain rules of interpretation you have to follow and only give a few of these to you. So you can write these down. They're all just explaining what he's saying here. But for example, you need to realize the Bible does have types in it. You can't deny that. I think there's a danger for some people to come to a topic like this one and say that we take the Bible literally here at Grace, so we don't believe in types. And we interpret it word for word, so we don't believe this type of this kind of thing exists. But that's not true because the Bible does have them in it. For example, in Romans 5, Adam is referred to as a type of Christ because he was sinless and Jesus was sinless. He started off life that way, and Christ started out that way. So there's a parallel between the two; that Old Testament event was illustrating a New Testament principle. In John 2, the temple is also referred to as a type of Christ. Because Jesus said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up, which he was speaking of in reference to his body." There's a connection there. In Hebrews 7, Melchizedek is treated that way along with Moses in Acts 3. In Matthew 12, Jonah is treated as a type, along with the Passover lamb in 1 Corinthians 5. But the point is that sort of thing happens in Scripture. You can't deny it. We do take the

Bible literally here at Grace Fellowship, but we don't take it woodenly because we believe it has a place for these things, which needs to be balanced out with another principle of interpretation.

And that is that everything is not a type. And what I mean by that is it just because types exist, that doesn't imply that you can open up your Bible and make a type out of whatever you want; you can't do that. You can't open up the Bible to the book of 1 Samuel and see a little man facing a giant and say, "That's like me and my battles today. I'm always gonna win." That's not true. Sometimes you lose, don't you. I mean, sometimes the giants knock you down. You can't open it up to Matthew 14 and see Peter walking on water as if I believe in Jesus, I'm always going to overcome the floods in my life. That's not true either.

And let me tell you why this is a big deal. That's because the Roman Catholic Church adopted that style of interpreting the Bible in the Middle Ages, and it wasn't too long before they came up with the idea that they could kill people in the name of God. They read in Matthew 16 where it says, "You are Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." And they took that to mean they're a type of Peter or the Pope is, and he has the authority to bind people and kill them. He could bind him with chains and bind them with shackles, he can bind them with a sword, bind them with whips, bind them with lashes, bind them of scourging all under the authority of God. And that is a total abuse of Scripture. But it shows you what can happen if you take this issue the wrong way.

Which brings it to one more principle for interpreting types. And that is that you need to assume that something probably is not a type unless you have a good reason to do otherwise. Because how else would you make sense of the Bible? I mean, how could you understand what Scripture is saying if you looked at every other word and said to yourself, "I wonder what that really means?" Like, if you look at a verse like Hebrews 11:17, which says, "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac," and you said, "I wonder who he's talking about when he says Abraham here." And you just let your imagination come up with anything. Or I wonder what he's talking about when he mentions offering Isaac. Let me just say it means this and this and this, and I feel like it means that and that and that; and the Spirit is telling me this, and the Spirit's telling me that. You don't have to do that; it's not necessary. Just open up your Bibles to the Old Testament, Genesis 22, and it will tell you what this is talking about.

I had a professor in seminary who used to tell us that when the plain sense of Scripture matches common sense, don't seek any other sense. Take every word in its primary ordinary usual meaning, unless the facts of the context tell you to do otherwise. Because God is not playing games with you when He wrote the Bible. And He's not trying to be hard to understand; He wants the Word to be clear, so you need to approach it that way. I know it's a little bit of a side note, but I wanted to say that in order to shepherd you a little bit because I know that a lot of us are exposed to different ideas about this. So when you hear the word "type" your ears perk up, and you wonder, are all those things I'm learning on the internet true? The answer is no. Google is not the best place to get your theology, friends. You can just assume the

author meant what he said in the most normal use of language unless there's something compelling you to take it another way. I've often heard the Bible referred to as the most abused book in the world. For this reason, because so many people read it selfishly. They don't want to hear what God thinks; they want to hear what they think, and they put it back into the passage. You want to avoid that error.

Which brings us to one more insight into the story of Abraham sacrifice of Isaac here, just a review these other ones. The first one is that Abraham offered Isaac up when he was tested. And then secondly, he did it after considering that God could raise the dead. Then thirdly, after offering up Isaac, he received him back as a type, which is where the passage moves on here. I mean, after saying this, this is where he ties it off. Because again, this is the greatest example of faith in the Old Testament. So after you say this about Abraham, there's nothing more to say about him. He's going to go on to talk about his sons and we'll get into that next week.

But for this week, I do want to do a summary of all this. Because after looking at all this, what do we do with this story about Abraham and Isaac? How do we apply to our lives? There's a couple things to apply here and take away from this.

The first one is this, when you look at this story, it really drives this point home, your faith always comes at a cost. When you believe in God like Abraham did, it always demands something from you. One commentator said, "When God bids a man come, He bids him come and die." Because God's grace is free, but it's not cheap. It requires everything you have. Which is what you see in this man's life way back in the Old Testament, because God asked Abraham for everything. You couldn't think of anything more precious to him than Isaac, and how does Abraham respond? Well, he obeys because he knows that this is what God deserves. He rose early in the morning, saddled up his donkey, and he went. He didn't postpone it, he didn't pause, he didn't delay and say, "I'll get to it later, Lord, when I have more time because I'm busy" You're busy, I'm also, we're all so busy. He obeyed immediately. We need to do the same. And we all have a tendency to want to resist God when He demands something like this from us. We all have a habit of wanting to argue with Him and put things off until later. Because the Lord says, "I want to take that thing away from you, I want to take that hobby away, or that relationship away, or that house, or the car, or the job, or the priority you place on it, because it's a stumbling block to you." And what do we do, we fight Him over it. And we resist Him. We say, "You can't have that, Lord, I want it. Don't take my Isaac from me. Abraham's life is a reminder that you can do that. When God demands something from you, you give it to Him right away.

Which brings you to another practical lesson or application we learn from the story of Abraham. And that is that before you give something like that to the Lord, you always have to remember that everything you have is His anyway. Isaac is God's. Your children are His. Your job, your house, your possessions, all that you have are His property. So if God asks you for something like that you should give it to Him knowing that it was His to begin with. Which is the way Abraham had to process this. And you can imagine when the Lord told him to kill his boy, it would have been hard because he would

have said "why?" But after thinking about it, he reasoned to himself, "I don't know what's going on. I don't know why God's doing this. But I know God gave him to me in the first place. So if God wants him back, so be it. I mean, who am I to resist God's will?" Because he had that kind of faith.

And by the way, the Lord rewarded him for this. You know, I told you guys before, that when you read the rest of the Old Testament, you find that Abraham had one child of the promise. And then afterwards, how many children did Isaac have? Remember, he had two. Remember their names? Jacob and Esau. Jacob would go on to have 12 sons who would grow up and become the 12 tribes of Israel, and they would have so many kids that Genesis 46 said there would be 70 of them when they went to Egypt. So they go from 12 to 70 in a short amount of time. Then they stay in Egypt. And Numbers 1 says that in Egypt, they would become about 2 million people. Get your mind around that. They go from 12 to 70 to 2 million in a few hundred years. One commentator said, "Nowhere else in history has anything like that rate of growth ever happened. Even if you think of 430 years, it's still supernatural. Because if the Jews continued to grow at that rate, they would be 2 billion people by the time of David; they would be 2 trillion people by the time of the exile in Babylon; and they will be 2 quadrillion by the time of Jesus Christ." But it all happened and started when one man gave up his child. Because he believed that God put him in my hands; I can get him back again. Why not? We all need to approach our blessings that way today.

And it brings you to one more application and that is in light of all this you have to ask yourself the question, "What does God want me to give today?" You know, if Abraham was called to give up his son, his most valuable present possession, what's God calling me to sacrifice? Probably it's not my son; not this way anyway. It's going to be something; what is it? If I could take a guess, I would imagine that for some of you, God would be asking you to give up your job or at least the priority that you place on it. Because we live in British Columbia; it's expensive here. And in order to make a living, some of you have to work like a dog, and you have to put in 60, 70, 80 hours a week, and the phone is always ringing, and it's always texting and the phone, phone, phone, phone. That horrible phone. So the one thing God may be asking you to do is when you come home, put the phone away, turn the computer off. Stop thinking about work all the time and open up your Bible instead. I mean, after all, what good is that phone gonna do you on Judgment Day. And how's that job going to help you when you stand face to face with God? It's not. In fact, when you die at your funeral, some of you may have one coworker show up. Your family will be there. How much time are you spending with your family? You shouldn't put such an emphasis on those things.

I would guess for others of you, I would imagine God may not be calling you to give that up. But He may be calling you to give up something like your possessions, or the priority you place on them. Because with all the money we have going into British Columbia, we sure do like to buy stuff, don't we? We've got stuff everywhere. Stuff in the house, stuff in the car, stuff in the office, we have stuff in the garage, with stuff in the yard. I just moved by the way, so this is really on my heart. And when you run out, we put stuff in a second house. And when we run out of space there, we put stuff in a storage

facility. And when we run out of space there, we put stuff in our parent's house in the basement. And it's so easy for them to take over your life. You know, it's been said that it's okay to own stuff, as long as the stuff doesn't own you. For some of you it's doing that, so you need to give it up.

For others of you, God may be calling you to sacrifice things like your time and your energy. He may be asking you to give up some extra nights or weekends, so you can serve people in the church and use it to help others. The lesson here is that whatever it is that God's calling you to give something, you need to give it because the Lord was not stingy with you when He saved you. He gave you everything He had. The least you could do is give something back with a generous hand.

Next week we're going to be finishing this part of the Hall of Faith by looking at Isaac and Jacob and Joseph; they're known as the patriarchs or the fathers of Israel. Those are the men who come after Abraham, that's his son, grandson and great grandson who carry on his legacy. So please come back and join us for that; it should be good.

But for now, in my studies this week, I came across a story of the time David Livingstone, who was a Scottish explorer and Africa was asked the question someone asked him, he said, "How could you make so many sacrifices?" The man had traveled 29,000 miles through the jungle on foot. He had been attacked by a lion once, starved to death several times, he had all but forgotten the English language at times because he was in the jungle so much that he hardly ever spoke it. So when people would speak English to him, he had to think for a minute. So someone asked him, you know, "How did you make so many sacrifices?" And his answer was this. He said, "I never made one." He said, "After what Christ had given for me, how could I ever do anything like that? Everything I gave, I gave it by grace."

Friends, I tell you that story because he's right. When you give to Jesus, it doesn't feel like a burdensome sacrifice. It's always a gift of grace. Grace was given to you; you give grace back. He gave you mercy; you give Him all that you have in response. Let me pray and ask the Lord that He would help us to do that.

Heavenly Father, we leave a story like this one, and I think we're all ashamed. When we think of the kind of confidence and trust that your servant Abraham had in You, it blows us away. God, he gave so much, and he gave us so freely out of love for you. Lord, what have we given? What have we done as a church? I know many of my brothers and sisters in here have given many things to you, but no one's done anything like this. At least I haven't. So God would you use this story to spur us on to love and good deeds.

We thank You for the cross. We thank You for the time Your Son was given freely and perfectly so that our salvation might be procured, and that everything we need to do to go to heaven was done by Him at the cross. But in response to that Lord, we have to go out and apply these words to our lives. Lord, would you increase our faith? Would you build up our confidence in You? So many times, Lord, when

we attempt great things for You, we often think of our weaknesses and our struggles and our shortcomings and our problems and our issues and us, us, us. But it's not about us. The Christian life is about You and Your power. Lord, we believe that Your power is great enough to overcome all our weaknesses. Your grace is sufficient for us. We believe that Lord.

Would You allow us Lord and help us to go out now and apply it. And, Lord, as we as we come back from this story in this passage, if there are things that we do need to give up, would You give us the courage to make changes that You may be glorified in our lives? May our priorities be Your priorities? May our thoughts be on eternal things and not earthly ones anymore? We're all tempted to get caught up in all the hustle and bustle down here in this world. May we look for the next, just like Abraham and all these people in the hall of faith today. Would you be glorified today? We pray in Christ's name, Amen.