

If I ask you this question: **What is faith?** What immediately comes to your mind? I mean right now...what's in your mind... What is faith? What comes to mind? Maybe a word like: Trust or Belief? Maybe a situation you recently encountered comes to mind. Maybe when I ask you: "What is faith," you might think of a person. Can I tell you what comes to my mind when I think of faith? This image:



Abraham and Isaac... Folks...that's faith if there's ever been faith. Can I tell you what else that picture represents... It represents God and Jesus. For God so loved the world...He gave (allowed the sacrifice) of His ONE and only Son.

That picture also represents something else. See if you can wrap your mind around this... That picture represents Worship! Did you hear me? That picture represents worship. You see...you and I can look through the Bible far and wide...Old Testament and New Testament and what we'll find throughout is the fact that true worship always requires sacrifice. I will even go so far as to say this: I'm convinced we can't truly worship the Lord God without having a faith that sacrifices. And that's the title of today's message: "Faith that Sacrifices."

### **Hebrews 11:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." <sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Some people don't like the account of Abraham and Isaac. Why? Because they don't like the fact that God tested Abraham the way He did. They think it puts God in a bad light...like it makes God some monster that He would test Abraham to offer up his son Isaac. They don't think that's fair. Well, let me ask you something: Was it fair that God had to give up His only Son for you and for me? Was that fair?

Listen, to give up that which is most precious is true sacrifice...true worship. Again, I would argue...if there is no sacrifice...there is no true worship. I would argue that you and I can't truly exhibit faith without a faith that's willing to sacrifice...AND when that sacrifice takes place...then we can honestly say there has been true worship. You see, it's one thing to say we have experienced God when all is good...it's quite another thing to say that we have experienced God when there's the sacrifice of everything that we hold dear and there's nothing left but God...

This morning I want us to ask ourselves...**do we truly have a faith that sacrifices**, because if we don't...we can't honestly say that we're here to worship...but, instead...we might have to admit that we're just here to GET! It's so easy to come to church just to get something from God? We say we come to worship God...and yet we can come to a place of worship and not worship at all... Listen, if you've only come this morning to fill up our tank...to "get fed," you're going TO MISS worshipping God. You see, if we only come to GET...and we don't give anything of ourselves...then there's not sacrifice. And if there's no sacrifice, there hasn't been worship. Oh, church family, we can easily make worship into something it's not...we can remake worship into something for us instead of something for God.

I know this is heavy...but, we'll never understand even REMOTELY what Abraham went through if we don't get this... **THE ESSENCE OF TRUE WORSHIP is a faith that sacrifices.**

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As we've seen over the last several weeks...here in Hebrews, the Apostle Paul is writing to Jews who were thoroughly accustomed to bringing a "sacrifice." Lambs...



Untold millions and millions of lambs were sacrificed through the centuries, as these lambs were brought to the Temple. Oh...the Temple was a very bloody place and it was a place that was a constant reminder that at the center of worship was sacrifice. We saw this in Hebrews 9, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." In fact, (this is interesting), do you know what God called the Temple? 2 Chronicles 7 records a conversation God had with Solomon...the builder of the first Temple.

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### **2 Chronicles 7:12**

**<sup>12</sup> Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice."**

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God called His house a "house of sacrifice." And that's exactly what happened there over and over... See it...see the picture...



Just look at all of those lambs. As those lambs were slain, the people were constantly reminded of their sin by the monotonous repetition of the sacrifices...over and over... Imagine the smell of all that blood and burnt flesh...constant reminders of the cost of sin. So, SACRIFICE was something these Jews were very familiar with...but, what had been lost through the centuries was the understanding that God wanted to have a relationship with them PERSONALLY...just like He had with Abel, Enoch, Noah and today, Abraham...the man who had a faith that sacrifices, which led to a personal encounter with God.

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Now to see this more clearly...**please turn with me. to Genesis 22** and I'll go ahead and warn you that we'll be jumping around some in the chapter.

### **Genesis 22:6-8**

**6** And 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 they went both of them together. **7** And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" **8** Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

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This was not Abraham and Isaac's first rodeo. It's obvious they've done this before because Isaac never said, "**Hey Dad, what's all this? What are we doing?**" No...Isaac knew exactly what was happening. They've got the knife (to kill the sacrifice) and the fire (to burn it as a burnt offering), but... **Isaac noticed something was missing**. The SACRIFICE. Where is it? Isaac knew that without the sacrifice there was no worship...ALL THEY WOULD HAVE WOULD BE A FIRE.

And you know what...sometimes I wonder if that's not what's happening in a lot of churches across America on Sundays. A lot of smoke...and not a lot of sacrifice. I watch the trends and I observe what other churches do...I do this online...and I see a lot services that are geared toward "make me feel good about myself." The preacher preaches little homilies to tickle the ears of the people...they preach about how you can "have your best life now" and they seldom talk about sin, righteousness, holiness...what it cost it Jesus to die for you and for me. Remember, Jesus said, "If you are going to follow me, you have to take up your WHAT? Cross (that's die...that's a sacrifice). This is what the Bible says:

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### Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

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### 1 Peter 2:4-5

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Are we offering up our lives? You see, Abraham, some 30 years earlier had to no longer CONFORM TO THE PATTERNS OF THE WORD and he had to choose to leave his pagan lifestyle of idol worship to go after Yahweh and trust Him! Indeed...that was a huge test...but, that was nothing compared to this test...the greatest test of his life.

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### Genesis 22:1-2

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

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Abraham said, "Here I am..." He knew the voice of the Lord, do you see that? He had a personal relationship with God...and that's the point Paul is making in Hebrews...it's always been the case...WE CAN HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD! But, here's where it begins to get gut-wrenching. Did you see what the Lord said to Abraham... **YOUR SON, YOUR ONLY SON, the SON YOU LOVE.** He had another son, right? Ishmael, the son who was born of the hand-maiden Hagar, because Abraham and Sarah got in a hurry and didn't want to wait on God...but Ishmael was not the SON OF PROMISE. Isaac was! And God said...OFFER HIM as a burnt offering.

Think about that. This couldn't have made any sense to Abraham! How is God going to fulfill His promise to bring from Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars and the sands of the sea, if Isaac is dead. But, there is no hesitation on Abraham's part. He left... And do you know how long the journey was? Three days. That's not a coincidence folks. How long was Jesus dead? 3 days. And don't you know Abraham must have that to him...his son was as good as dead for 3 days.

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Can you imagine those three days? How Abraham felt? Could he even sleep? Oh, the anguish! It had to be beyond belief...confusion...terror! What was God doing? Well, they arrive...and God told them the exact mountain to climb...Moriah.

### Genesis 22:9-10

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.<sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

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Listen...Isaac is not a baby, and he's not a little boy. He's a lad...a **na'ar**...that's the word "boy" in verse 12. That word means teenager. It's what David was when he slew Goliath. And think about this...Abraham is not a young man. He was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Think about



this...Isaac is a teenager and he is old enough not to get tied down by a 115?? year old man. What are you saying? I'm saying, Isaac was obedient too! See this picture...



I tried to imagine Andrew lying there! Isaac was obedient and trusted that his father knew what he was doing. This was a test for both of them!

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What was the test? The test was this: "Just how far would God have to go before He found something in Abraham's life, where Abraham would say, 'No, I'm not going to surrender that to you.'" How about you? How far would God have to go before He found something in your life where you said, "No, God! I won't surrender that!" For some I'm afraid the sacrifice...is as small as a car. They wouldn't give up a car for God. For some it's a job. For some it's a house, or a career. Now, I'm not saying all of this to shame us...but simply for us to feel the overwhelming magnitude of how Abraham's faith was being tested here.

A.W. Tozer said this:

**"We must in our hearts live through Abraham's harsh and bitter experiences if we would know the blessedness which follows them. The ancient curse will not go out painlessly; the tough old miser (Self) within us will not lie down and die obedient to our command. He must be torn out of our heart like a plant from the soil; he must be extracted in agony and blood like a tooth from the jaw. He must be expelled from our soul by violence as Christ expelled the money changers from the Temple... If we are set upon the pursuit of God, to truly worship Him, then He will sooner or later bring us to the test of total surrender."** A.W. Tozer, "The Pursuit of God"

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So, I'll ask you to look at the screens and let this picture sink in...



The knife is raised and he's ready to do it!

### **Genesis 22:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup> He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

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Abraham believed God! He trusted Him so fully that He was willing to go through with the SACRIFICE of his son. But how? How could he do it? Because he believed God could raise the dead!

### **Genesis 22:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. <sup>5</sup> Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

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I and the boy will come again to you! Abraham said to his servants: "WE are coming back!" Abraham believed God! He had a faith that sacrifices...even what he couldn't reason out in his own mind. He knew God would not go against His word...His promise to make a nation from Isaac, so he believed God would have to raise him from the dead! It's the only thing that made sense. And that's our text...

### **Hebrews 11:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." <sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

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Listen, the idea of resurrection had not happened yet. At this point in Biblical history, there is no account of resurrection. It's not something Abraham has ever seen. Just like Noah...he built a boat, but had never seen rain. Abraham believed and he knew God would not go against His word! And He won't! God will never go against His word... But listen, so often...when God's Word says one thing...something we don't like... Like: "Don't have sexual relations outside of marriage" 1 Thessalonians 4...we say, "But we love each other, so God is okay with it." No He's not...because He doesn't go against His Word.

Yet, so often, we choose NOT to offer up to God a sacrifice of obedience...but, instead we say...bless me and bless my new theology, God... Change your word for me God...because we all know that I'm here today to get fed...I'm here today so you can fill me up and make me happy.

Oh Listen, God doesn't exist to make you and me happy. We exist to glorify His name! And that means we will make the appropriate sacrifices in order that we may worship Him as a sacrifice of praise with our lives! We take up our cross!!! Death...sacrifice...for God...that's worship!

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What happened? Abraham got his son back! How might that have looked?



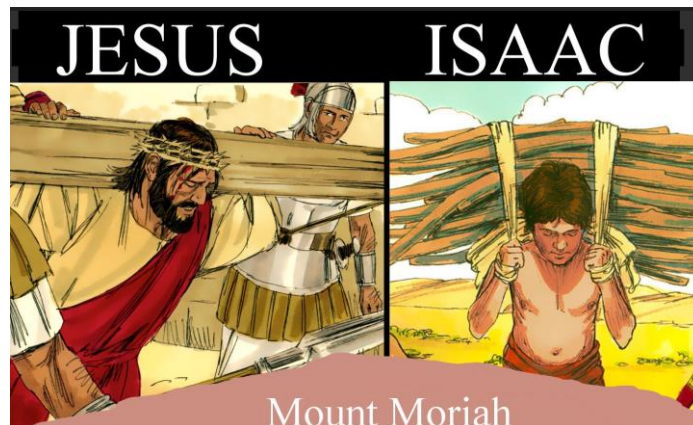
Oh, let that sink in? What happened? A substitute was provided, right? A ram...

**Genesis 22:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

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Oh, church family, the Lord provided and He always does! Amen! That ram was like Jesus...the ram was Isaac's substitute and Jesus was ours! You see, we're here today only because of the fact that Jesus was sacrificed on the cross! And where did that happen? On Mount Moriah...remember!



Moriah is the same mountain as Calvary. That's not a coincidence! That was God's plan! God said to Abraham... "Your son won't have to die Abraham...because, mine will!" What was caught in the thicket by its horns? A ram...not a lamb... do you find that interesting? What was the normal sacrifice? A LAMB! What does that mean? Listen...when the Angel of the Lord pointed to that ram in the bush...he was literally pointing to 2000 years later...where on that same mountain, Moriah, that we now call Calvary...



**"...God will provide the lamb..."**  
Genesis 22:8

God provided the Lamb...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! So, why are we here today, church? I'll tell you why...because at the center of all worship...of all faith, is sacrifice!