

Abraham's Trial

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Preacher: Rev John Maclean

[0 : 0 0] and let us read from verse 2 and he said take now thy son thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of we are reminded the very first words of the chapter that came to pass after these things one commentator makes a suggestion that this is after nine great trials after nine other trials God came and spoke to Abraham and put before him this other trial and it is reckoned that here Abraham is called upon to endure a still sterner test and what I want us to look at tonight is the trial of Abraham the severest trial that he faced take now thy son thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering we want us to notice three things about this trial the burden of the trial and secondly his behaviour in the trial and then thirdly the benefit of the trial first of all then the burden of the trial it is a great burden when you consider what he had to do he was being asked by God to give up something for which he dearly longed he was being asked by God to give up something which he had looked for something which God had promised to him which God had given to him he is now being asked to give it up and when you look closer

Abraham was being asked to sacrifice his son and notice the way it is put here Abraham said take now thy son thine only son Isaac his only son he was to take him and he was to sacrifice him the thing that was most dear to him he was to take it and put it to the side but also we are told thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest something that was very very precious to him he was to sacrifice and something else that God said to him God didn't say that Abraham I'm going to take your son away God didn't say Abraham your son is going to die but what God said was this

Abraham you take your son and offer him for a sacrifice there on Mount Moriah so you can see the burden of this particular trial God's and I think there are times when God's people are faced with a very severe trial you could see the stiffest or the sternest test yet for God is asking us to give up something or to be willing to sacrifice something that is very dear to us and it is very precious to us and you can imagine how Abraham helped you can imagine the burden he was under at this particular time a number of months ago I took a trip to Israel with the Christian witness to Israel and before leaving Inverness my wife and my little boy came with me they came to see me off and you can imagine the feelings when you're leaving your wife and your little boy behind you and you're going abroad and you don't know what is going to happen and especially when when I was considering that well being married for 10 years and no family and then we have a little boy and if anything was to happen to him or if anything was to happen to me and when we went to when I arrived in Israel the first place or one of the first places we went to was the place which looked on to Mount Moriah and that night I was in my own quiet time I was considering this particular trial of Abraham and in just a small way I was trying to put myself into Abraham's shoes and I was trying to picture the situation at that Inverness airport if I was told in some way that I was never going to see my wife or my little boy again or if I was told there thousands of miles away from them that I might not see them again

I couldn't take it in him I couldn't appreciate it I couldn't understand it I couldn't see it now you can imagine how Abraham felt when he was being told that not only was his son to be taken away or was his son to be sacrificed but that Abraham himself was to make this particular sacrifice the burden of the trial you see there was nothing wrong with his promised son it wasn't that his son wasn't meant to be born he was meant to be there there was nothing wrong with the fact that he had this particular son it was the son of promise and God was asking him to give up this most legitimate thing now you can imagine how Abraham felt the burden of the trial the second point his behaviour in the trial and I think when you consider

Abraham's behaviour it is a lesson for us it is an example especially when we may be going through a difficult or a trying time Abraham was faced with his trial you may be faced with a trial you may be going through a particular difficulty at this time I want us to notice the behaviour of Abraham in this trial and first of all he was passive to the command we don't read of any word of argument we don't have Abraham questioning God and asking him Lord why do I have to do this why do I have to go through this particular trial you don't even find Abraham asking God or saying to God

[8 : 40] Lord I've gone through many other stiff trials can I not have another trial any other trial but this one God he was passive or you can put it this way there was this obedience to the word of God there was this acceptance of the will of God God it was like saying thy will be done the first question I put to you what is your behaviour under the trial that God has for you are you accepting it as from the Lord believing that all things are working together for good or do you find yourself arguing against God do you find yourself questioning God and asking him why have I to go through this do you find yourself asking God for another trial you know there are times when we are going through a difficulty or a trial we imagine that no one is going through this particular trial or that no other trial could be worse than this one

Abraham was passive he was obedient to the word of God then secondly I want us to notice how prudent he was we are not told that Abraham consulted with anyone about what God was asking him to do you see the command of God was clear it was plain now you can imagine maybe the situation where Abraham would go to someone and say what do you think I should do do you think it's right for me to do this do you think I meant to do this imagine if Abraham went to his wife and told her what God was requiring of them he couldn't because he didn't consult with them because if he did it would weaken his resolve know there are times when we know the will of God and we know what God's will is for us and we know what God is requiring of us to do and yet we will we will question we will ask we will consult now I'm not saying there's anything wrong with seeking advice or seeking help but when we are coming to someone and saying do you think I should really do this is it right for me to do this or is it is it right for me to stop doing that when it is clear from God's word that you ought to when you know his will when you know what he is requiring of you how prudent he was you know there are times when yes we have to make big decisions in our lives we believe that God is leading us in a particular way and we believe it is in accordance with God's will and God's word and we go and we begin consulting seeking advice when we know what we ought to be doing what is happening our our we are being weakened our resolve is being weakened and then a third thing about his behavior was his promptness we are told that Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass he did not delay we are not told that he was given a particular time

God didn't say to him Abraham tomorrow go and take thy son all he was told was that he had to take his son now Abraham could have said God has told me that I must do this oh I'm going to do it I'm going to do the will of God I'm going to go through with it I'm going to do all that he's asking me but I'm not going to do it tomorrow I'm going to do it but maybe next week is time enough oh I'm determined that I'm going to do it and all the time putting it off and I think with regard to our obedience to the command of to the commands of God's will we are like that oh I'm determined that I'm going to do it and at times when men and women are considering coming to the table of the Lord oh yes one day I'm going to do it or if it's with regard to say personal relationships things that we have to put right between one another yes we can be saying we can say I'm determined that I'm going to do it

Abraham was prompt he did not delay he immediately began to do what God had required and then the fourth thing we noticed about Abraham's behaviour in this trial and that was the precautions that he took you see God had asked him to take his son and to sacrifice him now he was even told the place where he had to go Abraham could have landed there and realized that he had no wood or that he had no knife or that he had no fire to burn the wood he could have forgotten to take something with him maybe deliberately forgotten but in a way there was still the obedience to the command but at the same time he had forgotten

Abraham did not want to break down in any of the deeds that God that was required for the performing of God's way all the difficulties or all the things that could have prevented his obedience he foresaw them and he was determined that he was not going to fall down and over we are told how he took the wood we are told how he took everything that was required he made all the precautions that were necessary you know there are times when we feel there is something that we have to do God's word is making it clear to us that maybe there is someone we have to go and apologize to for something we leave the house and yes we are determined that we're going to go to the place for that person is you know at the back of our mind we can we we we could know that that person is not going to be there when we arrive but we'll say well i'm going to the house and i'm going to ask whoever answers the door is so and so in and when they tell me they're not in well i i i tried i i did my best i came to apologize or i came to put things right and they just didn't happen to be there or that you could think of many other illustrations where we know the will of God and we don't take the necessary precautions or we don't do all that is required to fulfill the command of God where there is some area in which we fall down and then notice another thing how he persevered how he persevered you see the journey took three days and as Abraham was walking or as he was riding along making for Mount Moriah you can imagine all the thoughts that were flooding into his mind that he persevered and then you could you can think of the question that his son was asking why do we have to go so far and then there was the ultimate question was where is the lamb and Abraham persevered he was going to do the will of God and i think also you see his perseverance in the way he prepared the altar to persevere and you know this going back to the point i made earlier there is a another very important point there in the way Abraham prepared the altar he didn't want even that to fall down so then the last thing to notice about Abraham's behavior or about Abraham's actions there was one thing that he knew one thing of which he was persuaded that God as you read in Hebrews that God was going to raise him up again you see we have the state of Abraham

[19 : 39] and he was persuaded that God was a covenant-keeping God that God's promises would be fulfilled and that the promises that God gave to him with regard to his son Isaac they were going to be fulfilled and Abraham was persuaded of this Abraham believed in a covenant-keeping God and I believe that is the reason why he behaved or why he acted in the way he did he was going to go through with the sacrifice believing that it was possible for God to raise him up again and the second question I put to you is this how do you behave under the trial are you careful in what you do in your particular trial are you careful what you see when you're going through this particular trial are you careful what you think as you're in this particular trial you see in a time of trial we can have thought we can have complaining thoughts in our time of trial we can say things to people that we regret later that we will regret what is our behavior as we go through a time of trial this is the great example

Abraham's faith when Abraham's faith was tested he believed he believed God he believed that God had a purpose in this he believed God himself so coming to the third point the benefit of the trial of the trial you see God had a purpose in all this and we are told how Abraham was going to go through with the whole trial and how he was going to sacrifice his son and then the voice from heaven came and prevented him from slaying his son one is to notice the first benefit was that the covenant that God had already made with Abraham was verified it was strengthened or it was underlined and we notice in in the in verse 17 well from verse 16 and said by myself have I sworn saith the Lord for because thou has done this thing and has not withheld thy son thine only son but in blessing

I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed is the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is upon the sea shore and thy seed shall protect the gate of his enemies this was the covenant that God had made earlier with him being underlined being verified by God God and I believe that when God is taking his people through times of difficulty and times of time one benefit or one blessing from it is God renewing his promises to you or you can think of many promises that God has given to his people and you know when God has taken you through it the promises become that bit more real to you I will never leave thee I will never forsake though all men should forsake we have the promise that God would never forsake us we have the promise that all things are under the control of God we have the promise that he is working out his plan and his purpose for each one of us he is saying that has run with patience the race that is set before us the individual race that God has for you so you have this promise being renewed that God is going to take you through that God is going to be with you the one who is going before you as to break it up of your way the one who is behind you saying this is the way walk you in it

God will renew or underline the promises that they have made in other words the promises of God will become more precious to you and God has taken you through a particular time of testing and trial but then a second benefit was he had a clearer view of Christ a clearer view of Christ the Lord himself said he saw my day now you can imagine the situation Abraham was about to sacrifice his son and the voice from heaven said no when Abraham turned round he saw the lamb caught in the sickest and I believe then that he saw he had a clearer view of a coming savior man was to die for man should have died for his sin but there was the one promise of God came to deliver sin or to deliver men and women from their sins to die on their behalf now that was it I believe that was the view that Abraham had the point I wish to make is this whatever trial or time of testing we go through

I believe that it should give to us a clearer view of Christ I would add this that no matter what test we are going through or no matter what blessing we receive from God if it is at all from God it will give to us a clearer view of Christ it will make some part of his of his ministry or of his work more precious and more real to it you can imagine Abraham he was going to make a sacrifice and I believe that this sacrifice that Christ was going to make on behalf of his people was something that was very real to Abraham you may think of something in your own life where there was you had to make a particular sacrifice where there was something you had to leave or something you had to give up it was in the will of God well then you can you have this clearer view of all that Christ gave up all the heavens glory the glory that he left behind him to come down to his life to come down to his world to die for the sins of his people a clearer view of Christ you have had to go through a particular prolonged trial a real a burden that was affecting you not just in the physical but maybe in a mental way you can imagine some of the agony you endured that point you to Christ imagine the suffering imagine the agony he endured on behalf of his people a particular trial that you may be going through is that you are being taunted or people a laugh at you because of the stand you are taking for Christ you can think of all the mocking that he received the trial gave him a clearer view of Christ and it made the Lord more real and more precious to him my friend remember

[28 : 25] God has a purpose in all trials you are not going through something just for a for no purpose at all it will give to you it ought to give to you if we are behaving at right under the trial it ought to focus our attention more upon Christ and it ought to make him more real and more precious to you and the third thing was the third benefit was to hear the commending voice of God and I think this is wonderful I know thou hearest God the commending voice of God and I think that when the Lord's people have been brought through a particular trial or they hear the well done from God there is the commending voice where you have come through the trial and you begin you're you're reading in the word of God and you see certain verses and certain promises becoming alive to you becoming more real to you it is the voice of God speaking to you commending you

God commends these people by his word through his word maybe as you're as you have sat under the preaching of God's word you have heard the commending voice of God acknowledging what you have done as it is here God saying to Abraham I know I know your belief or I know your reverence or I know your fear I know your love and this is a comfort to any believer that God speaks in such a way to his children and he does we were singing in Psalm 103 such pity as a father has unto his children dear like pity shows the Lord is such as worship him in here and as a father will commend and comfort his child when he has gone through some trial or test or difficulty or problems or hurt the father will comfort his son his child through God will comfort and command his children and to sum it all up

I would sum it up in this way the benefits that came from this trial came because of the way Abraham behaved under the trial and any benefit or the blessings and the benefits we receive from our time of testing and from our time of trial determined by the way we react under the test and if we are bitterly complaining against God and if we are unhappy under the trial or if we are feeling that God is being unjust to us then you cannot expect to receive a great blessing from the Lord through the trial that you know like Job when the Lord when the Lord's people when an individual when one partner is taken and the other partner is left like Job we can say the Lord gave the Lord takes away blessed be the name of the Lord that is a right attitude under a particular trial to lose one's loved one to lose one's partner and to say the Lord gave or you still feel the hurt that doesn't stop the tears that doesn't in any way take away the void the emptiness that you feel within you because you adopt the right attitude

God is there to bless to undertake to strengthen us to help us God as we have faced with that particular a difficulty or trial you can think of many others many other trials that you have had to endure as you adopt the right attitude of mind and of heart God will make it make the trial the test a blessing to you you know as we draw near to the end of a communion season if you have received any blessing from God over that these last few days remember the devil is going to be around the corner waiting for you and he is going to he is going to he also test and he is going to try any blessing that you have to God you know one way we behave under the test that comes from the enemy is we look to God we look we look beyond ourselves we look to God and we are assured that when we look to him he is there to help us and to undertake for us and there are times when we have received a particular blessing from God that he will take us through a time of testing something is immediately after it and again our behavior under that trial will determine the benefits we receive from us may God bless these thoughts through and let us pray gracious Lord be with us and bless us we pray that the light of thy countenance would shine upon us that the love of the gospel of Jesus Christ would flutter us that the power of thy

Holy Spirit would take control of us and that we would be obeying the command of thy word that we would be presenting ourselves living sacrifices unto thee we pray then oh God that thou would take our lives and let them be consecrated Lord to thee forgive us oh God if there is anything we tend to hold back from thee forgive us oh God if we are not willing to lay all upon the altar of sacrifice for thy steps oh Lord we thank thee that thou dost not ask us to bear the impossible we bless thee that thou dost not ask us to go through any trial that is going to bring us completely down we realize at times that we are brought low but oh Lord we thank thee that there is the everlasting arms underneath us able to lift us and to strengthen us and to enlighten us in our way bless us then oh God with thy blessing bless us in the days that are ahead undertake for us in all that we seek to do we ask it in Jesus name

[36 : 28] Amen Amen