

Paradox of Sacrifice

The Binding of Isaac, Part 3

Genesis 22:15-18

September 15th, 2024

I. Introduction

The first time the voice cried out from Heaven it was to stop Abraham's hand; the Lord declared, "Now, I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (v. 12). That first voice was the _____: "Congratulations, you passed." Abraham demonstrated that he feared the Lord. He demonstrated this fear by choosing obedience to the Lord over his fatherly love for Isaac and over all that was bound up with Isaac. Abraham trusted in the Lord, even when everything was put on the line. But then the Lord speaks a second time from heaven, and this time He speaks of Abraham's _____.

II. The Text — Gen. 22:15-18

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

III. Paradox of Sacrifice

Abraham laid it all on the altar—and how did God respond? God gave it all back. Abraham obeyed the Lord, and by obeying the Lord, he received back all of what he was called to give up. He received it back with glory, with honor, with "Well done, good and faithful servant." This is the _____ of sacrificial obedience: Abraham sacrifices it all to the Lord, and the Lord gives it all back to him, for he is the good and faithful servant who has learned the lesson of _____.

IV. The Economy of God's Grace

The Apostle in Heb. 6:7-8 describes the economy of God's grace. The earth receives God's grace; it drinks in the rain that falls upon it, and if it bears fruit that land receives _____ from God. But when grace is received but not acknowledged—when the land receives the rain but produces only thorns and thistles—that land is rejected and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

Abraham understood this economy. He drank deeply from God's blessings, from God's grace. And he bore the fruit that delighted God. He acknowledged it was all from His hand, for when God called him to make a return, he did not grumble. He did not shy back. He was not selfish. Though the sacrifice was great—for the *gift* was great—yet his heart said with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, _____ be the name of the Lord." Abraham did not have a sense of entitlement. There was no kicking and screaming; no refusal to relinquish back to the Lord what belonged to Him in the first place.

V. Learning the Lesson of Grace

The Lord has made us _____ of any number of good things. When the Master of the house calls us before Him to make an account of these things, and when He desires a reallocation of His good things, He is free to do with His stuff what He will.

This includes, for instance, all the material goods we are entrusted with. God has blessed us with an abundance of conveniences and luxuries, of wealth and material blessings. We have cars and homes and couches and running water. We have land and books and so on. The world and its fullness has been given to us—and it is all from Him. It is all grace. It is all given to us by His mere pleasure.

We have not only been given material blessings, but we also have relational blessings. From God we have fathers and mothers, our spouse, our children, our friends—these are all from Him. But what about when He takes these away? This was what Abraham had to respond to—the prospect of losing Isaac—the prospect of damaging his relationship with Sarah by *killing* Isaac. This, too, is what Job faced.

The same is true for all the things we enjoy—safety and civil peace, freedom, soundness of mind and body, wine and steak. It's all from God. It's all given to us because He likes to give good gifts to His children. But He also regularly teaches us the lesson of grace by testing our _____ to hand it back. How we respond to this call is telling. It puts a megaphone to our actual _____. We confess these things, but do we actually *believe* these things. In all of this, we must remember that the same good God who gave these good things to us is the same good God whose hands hold them when we let go.

VI. Grace—Sacrifice—Glory

The pattern we see play out in with Abraham is the pattern of Grace—Sacrifice—_____.

- GRACE: God gave it all to Abraham freely.
- SACRIFICE: Abraham freely returned it all to His hand.
- GLORY: God gave it all back again, with glory and honor and praise: “Because you have obeyed My voice I will surely bless you.”

This pattern did not end with Abraham. This is the rule of the Gospel and Jesus does not tire of repeating it to us. See Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Luke 17:33; Jn. 12:25. Our lives are gifts from God. It is all of grace. And often God calls us to give it back to Him: to lose it for His sake—not just when we first hear the call and decide to leave our old ways behind. Even in the middle of faithfully serving the Lord, like Job, like Abraham, we are called to give it all back to him. And when we lose our life for His sake, Jesus says this is how we save it and keep it—how we gain back our life with glory and honor and praise.

VII. As we come to the Table . . .

This Table is set with the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus our Lord. And here we see that our God has gone before us. We are called to give it all to God—but God has done it first. He has given it all to us. For God so loved the world that He gave up His only begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.