

Our text for today is one of the most heart wrenching accounts in the Bible, and at the same time it shows the Love of God perhaps more than anything else. This text takes us to

Mount Moriah: Where the LORD provides our Substitute.

*“1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 Then He said, “Take now 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.” 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” 8 And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together. 9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.
11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.” 12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” 13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”*

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Here on Mount Moriah we can see The Most Painful Test; The Most Perfect Love; and The Most Powerful Strengthening. The first verse says that God was testing Abraham. That was

The Most Painful Test.

Is there anyone who can't feel the turmoil and pain in Abraham's soul when God asked Him to do the unthinkable, offer up his one and only son as a burnt offering to the Lord. God really emphasized this when He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love.” This was the son that God promised him when he was 75 years old—the son that Abraham waited another 25 years for. Not only that but God also promised that through Isaac, Abraham would become the father of a great nation and one of his descendants would be the promised Savior. If Abraham killed Isaac now, how could God keep any of these promises? It didn't make any sense.

Yet Abraham didn't hesitate for a moment. He got up early in the morning and took Isaac along with the wood and the fire for the sacrifice and set out. It took him three days to get to the place God told him to go to do this. Three long, agonizing days to consider what he was about to do. Yet Abraham pushed on. Can you imagine how Abraham must have felt when Isaac asked, “Father, ... Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Yet he was not deterred. He answered, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” He resolutely went on, built the altar, laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac, laid him on the altar. Then he picked up the knife to kill his son.

Just then a voice from heaven stopped him. “Abraham, Abraham!” ... “Do not lay your hand

on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Whew! He passed the test! Just as Abraham trusted, God did provide a ram for the burnt offering. I’m sure Abraham never offered a sacrifice with more gratefulness and thanksgiving than on that day when he offered that ram. And just think about how relieved Isaac must have been to be spared and to be able to offer that ram instead.

Now Abraham understood, this was not just a test, it was a lesson on

The Most Perfect Love.

We read, “Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” He doesn’t say, the LORD HAS provided. He wasn’t talking about providing the ram caught in the thicket. He said “The LORD WILL provide.” The Angel of the Lord must have revealed to him, that just like God provided a ram to sacrifice in place of Isaac, so God will provide the perfect sacrifice to take the place of all mankind on that very same mountain. The comment afterwards is also very interesting, “As it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” Remember, Moses was writing this over 400 years later and the people still knew and understood that God will provide the perfect sacrifice on that very mountain. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had passed it down from generation to generation.

I believe that Abraham also understood the message from God that the perfect sacrifice God would provide on that mountain would not be another ram, but God’s one and only Son. Do you remember when Jesus told the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” By Jesus’ own testimony Abraham saw Jesus as the Substitute and the Savior of the world on that very mountain. And Abraham’s test was meant to draw attention to the magnitude of the sacrifice that God would make for us. God spared Abraham’s son, but He would not spare His only begotten Son. That was the most Perfect Love. It was a love so amazing, so divine, it does demand my soul, my life, my all.

Not only that, but when Jesus said that to the Jews, they said, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” That’s when Jesus replied, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:56-58. Jesus was there on that Mountain in the land of Moriah. Who stopped Abraham from killing Isaac? It was the Angel of the Lord. And who was the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament? It was the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Jesus. Jesus spared Isaac knowing full well that one day He would be born as a descendant of Isaac and that He would be the sacrifice to spare us all from eternal death.

That was the most perfect love. We marvel at Abraham being ready to sacrifice Isaac at God’s command. That helps us to really appreciate the amazing perfect love that would move God to go through with such a sacrifice to pay for our sins. Abraham did it for a holy, perfect, loving God. God did it for sinful, rebellious creatures. And he did it to make us His children. May we marvel with the Apostle John, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” 1 John 3:1

Seeing the Perfect love of God also provides

The Most Powerful Strengthening.

Do you wonder how could Abraham go through with that test? The simple answer was faith. Abraham believed and trusted God. He knew God promised that a great nation including the promised Savior would come from Isaac. So he knew that somehow God would keep that promise. The book of Hebrews tells us that “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that **God was able to raise him up, even**

from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” 11:17-19

That strength of faith to look past the things you can see with your eyes and hold on to God's promises did not come from within Himself. It came from God. Abraham's faith and trust was not always so strong. It proved to be rather weak at times, like when he lied about Sarah being his sister. Or when he thought he had to help God keep his promise and had a child with Hagar. But God kept renewing His promises and showing himself to be faithful. In that way God built up his faith to the point we see it in our text today.

God is doing the same for us here tonight. He made the most incredible promise that He would provide the sacrifice to take our place so that we would not have to suffer the death that we deserve, the death which separates us from God's love forever. That is the lesson we learn from our time on Mt. Moriah. God is Faithful. Now especially during the Lenten Season, we see how God kept that promise. **“He did NOT spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.”** He kept the most difficult promise of all. The promise that took the greatest love and devotion, the greatest commitment. That gift of love should make us absolutely certain that God will keep every promise. As Paul continues, since God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **“how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”** Not necessarily all things that we want but all things that He promises; all things that are truly good.

That is a powerful source of strength for our faith. Such perfect love will not let us down. We know our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. We can know that our Salvation is complete. There is nothing that can condemn us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We can know that in every trial God is with us and will use it for our Good. So we shouldn't complain, but trust God and rejoice in the trials, knowing that God is working for our good. When we truly trust His promises, then we can live our lives with confidence and joy. And we can joyfully serve Him. We can do whatever He asks without fear knowing that we are doing God's will and it will be good.

Thankfully God doesn't give us any tests like He tested Abraham. But whatever tests God does send us, we too will pass them when we learn to trust God above all. And any tests that we fail, God will use to strengthen us even more by showing us His faithfulness.

All praise be to God.

Amen.