

“By faith Abraham....offered up Isaac” Hebrews chapter 11 verse 17

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, and that those descendants would come through his son Isaac. Job done? Many of us reading the passage in Genesis referred to here for the first time might be left aghast at what God asked Abraham to do next.

“Take your son,” he said, “your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” The fact that Abraham isn't told exactly where he is going is now the least important aspect. There are three things here that we would forgive Abraham for concluding could not possibly be from God.

How would God ever tell anyone to kill their own son? That is beyond comprehension, surely. And why would God tell Abraham to offer a human sacrifice at all? Isn't one great distinction between God and some of the deities of the pagan nations that they demand human sacrifices while he does not? Finally, isn't Isaac the means by which God's promise is to be carried out? How can Abraham have descendants if Isaac dies?

But Abraham has learned faith. Though his heart must have been heavy, he set out to obey God's command without question, even getting to the point of raising his knife to kill Isaac, before God sent an angel to prevent him.

Abraham had reached a point in his journey of faith where he knew that God could do the impossible, even if he couldn't get anywhere near explaining how. Hebrews tells us that he knew that God could raise Isaac from death if he wanted to, and he knew that he was reliant on God and not Isaac to bring about the things that God had promised.

And that's the point of this test of faith. When we believe that God has told us to do something, we look for the resources which will enable us to do it. They may be finance, or people, or materials. But if we are not careful than we begin to place our faith in the resources that God has given us to do the job he has told us to do, rather than trusting God himself. The work that we then do for God becomes a limited human endeavour rather than something that God does.

God wants us it to be clear that the things that he does in and through our lives are resourced and done by him. That is why he wants us to make him more and ourselves less in our lives. No one will come to faith if we are concerned with exalting ourselves. One of the primary ways that God shows himself to the world is through us, and one element of that is that he wants to do things in our lives that seem impossible to human perception, so that people ask; “How did they get through that situation?”, “How did they do that with so little?” “How did they succeed when everything was against them?”

When God moves us to do something, however small or large, the eyes of faith do not look at the resources that we have, but to the God for whom nothing is impossible.

Prayer

Father, how could any human resources or talents be sufficient to carry out your great plan for our lives or for your creation. How do we reveal you if we are only working to the limits of our resources or abilities? Please help us to remain focused on you and your glory, so that it will be clearly seen that what is done in and through us is done by you, to your eternal glory. In Jesus name, amen.

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