

Lesson 15 Hebrews 11:17-19¹

VERSES 17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,¹⁸ of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,”¹⁹ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Genesis 22:1-18

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.”

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to 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.”

¹⁵ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,¹⁶ 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—¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descen-

¹ Unless otherwise stated, main text scriptures are in the NASB Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Supporting text is in the NKJV Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Unless otherwise noted, definitions of Greek words are from the Strong’s Concordance.

dants 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. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

The above passage has been grossly misinterpreted.

1. Error #1 Arguing from Silence

The first major error people make when speaking of the Genesis account of Abraham offering up Isaac is that they read-in to Abraham's thinking process. They attribute thoughts and fears into the scene about which the text does not even hint. They will say that Abraham certainly must have wondered why God would give Him Isaac and then "take him away". They will insert a narrative that is SIMPLY NOT PRESENT. The truth is that after God gives Abraham the directive, it simply says, "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." From Genesis, we know NOTHING of how Abraham *felt*. We only read that he obeyed God the very next day.

Later writers, reflecting on the incident, make much of the turmoil in Abraham's heart, although the biblical narrative has little enough to say on this score. Indeed, the impression which we get from the biblical narrative is that Abraham treated it as God's problem; was for God, and not for Abraham, to reconcile his promise and his command. F.F. Bruce

- ***Abraham had experience.***

God spoke to Him. Abraham received the promised Isaac. He was confident in God's goodness and promise to Him. Similarly, we also gain experience with God and in faith. We can come to a place where we do not question God's guidance nor fear it, but simply "trust and obey".

- a. **However, from Hebrews 11:19, we come to understand what was actually in Abraham's mind when we read, "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."** Abraham did not fear at the command of God. He believed. His faith caused him to obey with confidence. He knew that Isaac was promised to him. Some have said, "Abraham believed, 'The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away,'" but THIS IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE. Abraham believed that at the end of this story, Isaac would be alive, even if God had to rise him from the dead.

Second, faith solves all riddles and doubts when we are in a dilemma: what a problem confronted Abraham; what! shall I offer Isaac and bring to naught God's promises, or must I disobey Him on the other side? Faith removed the difficulty: "accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." Faith believes the accomplishment of the promise, whatever reason and sense may say to the contrary; it cuts the knot by a resolute dependence upon the power and fidelity of God. A.W. Pink

There we are told that the patriarch said unto his young men, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you" (verse 5). This is exceedingly blessed. It shows us that Abraham was not occupied with his faith, his obedience, or with anything in himself, but solely with the living God: the "worship" of Him filled his heart and engaged all his thoughts. The added words "and come again to you" make it unmistakably plain that Abraham confidently expected Jehovah to raise again from the dead the one he was about to sacrifice unto Him as a burnt offering. A.W. Pink

- b. This is the lesson that is being communicated here. Pure faith trusts completely without fear. It does not waiver. Abraham didn't have to give himself a pep talk. He didn't have to overcome fear about the situation. He had total confidence that the promise of God would remain. The illustration of Abraham is an example of what the author has just written:

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ²For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

2. Error #2 False Application of Scripture

Another false teaching that has come from the story in Genesis is that we need to be willing to slay the promises God has made to us. While it is true that we should always be willing to obey in faith, GOD IS NOT GOING TO ASK YOU TO KILL SOMEONE. It seems to go without saying, but some unstable souls have actually thought God asked them to kill a child.²

3. Error #3 Ignoring the Whole of Scripture

The main false idea that surfaced was that God gives but he might ask you to give what He's given back. However, we can be confident, if God has made a provision or a promise to us, He will not take it back. These verses should be of considerable comfort to us.

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Hebrews 6:17

It is impossible for God to lie.

Numbers 23:19-20

*"God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make*

it good?

²⁰ Behold, I have received a command to bless;

*He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it."*³

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

² For one tragic example of this, go to:

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/03/29/children.slain/index.html?iref=newssearch>

³ Spoken by Balaam to Balak when asked to curse the children of Israel.

4. Error #4: Ignorance of the Gospel of Grace

If you don't know the good news of God's love for you. If you think He doesn't like you, if you think He's against you, not for you, if you think you have to work to get His favor/grace, or if you don't know you are completely and forever forgiven, you will never be at peace with God to ask for anything. In other words, if you don't have a foundation in the good news of His grace, you can't understand one Scripture completely. The good news illuminates Scripture. Mixture confuses it. Every believer needs to have a strong foundation in New Covenant (not mixed Covenants) theology.

5. Error #5 Ignoring Context!

This error occurs when someone doesn't pay attention to the whole story. This is also called "text-lifting"—using one verse to make a point that isn't true when taking into the consideration the whole picture.

- a. God established a covenant with Isaac which was to be an EVERLASTING covenant; not only with him but with his descendants. This clearly meant that Isaac would have children. **ABRAHAM BELIEVED THIS.**

Genesis 17:19

Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.

Genesis 21:1

And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken.

Genesis 21:3

And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.

Again, let us not ascribe thoughts and emotions to Abraham which are not recorded. It DOES NOT SAY, that Abraham was afraid nor that he questioned what God asked him to do. It simply says that he obeyed. By this time he had witnessed the amazing miracle of Isaac's conception and birth. Let us not read into the account what we ourselves might have thought or felt. Hebrews 11:19 tells us what he thought. He walked in faith. He concluded that God had would raise Isaac from the dead if need be. And indeed, his did figuratively.

6. Error #6: It is not correct Bible interpretation to ask, "How does this apply to me," rather, we should ask, "DOES this apply to me," and if so, how?

- a. God PROMISED to make an everlasting covenant with Isaac and his descendants. **Did Abraham believe this? Yes, he did. Was God faithful? Yes, He was.**
- Abraham's BELIEVED GOD.
 - He BELIEVED in God's good character and intentions toward Him.
 - He BELIEVED God's PROMISE that Isaac would have descendants.

- He didn't know how the story would play out, but he BELIEVED WITHOUT ONE DOUBT that either God would provide another sacrifice or that he would raise Isaac from the dead.
- b. For those to whom the letter is written, this is an encouragement. Believe in God. Believe in His Messiah. Believe in His New Covenant
- c. For we who read this account, we also are encouraged to believe in God's goodness and provision/promises.

MORE APPLICATIONS

1. Abraham's faith in God and in God's promise was accounted to him as righteousness before he was even circumcised, **EVEN BEFORE HE WAS WILLING TO OFFER UP ISAAC**. Thus, our faith is also accounted to us as righteousness apart from works.

Romans 4:1-12

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." ⁴Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

***⁵But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.** ⁶just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:*

⁷"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,

And whose sins are covered;

⁸Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

*⁹Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? **Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.** ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, **a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised,** that he might be the father of **all those who believe,** though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹²and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also **walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.***

2. Abraham's faith is a type of faith apart from the law. Just as Abraham was righteous apart from keeping the law, so are we. The Law would not come until after the lives of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and 400 years of captivity in Egypt. Just as Abraham was blessed apart from the law, so are we.

Galatians 3:5-9

*Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— ⁶just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." ⁷Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸**And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."** ⁹**So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.***

3. **FAITH PLEASES GOD.** When we believe in the benevolent character of God, in His provisions for us, and in His promises to us, HE IS PLEASED. IT BRINGS HIM JOY. The whole lesson here is that of FAITH. Faith comes by hearing of His grace. When we hear

of God's grace toward us (his love for us, his good intentions toward us, what he has promised, what He has provided, and who we are in Him), FAITH COMES. When we believe in Him, we bring Him joy. Read this again and hear the pleasure of God within. God confirms his promise to Abraham.

Genesis 22:15-18

Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,¹⁶ 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—¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

4. Types and shadows are important to God.

- By being willing to give his only son, Abraham was representing the love of God that would one day give "His only begotten Son" that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

Genesis 22:12

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."

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

He received him back from the dead, says our author, "as a type"-meaning, probably, in a manner which prefigured the resurrection of Christ. Is it this incident which is referred to in the words of Christ in John 8:56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it, and was glad"? F.F. Bruce

- Abraham expressed His faith in God to provide a sacrifice in place of Isaac.

Genesis 22:7-8

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."

- Indeed, God provided a lamb. This was a type of the Lamb that would be provided for us.

Genesis 22:13-14

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."

The Lord Will Provide—Jehovah Jireh

We often think of financial provision when we think of Jehovah Jireh, and yes, God will provide for you financially, but there are other things we NEED(ED)...like the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We couldn't save ourselves. He provided the Lamb. We need help in hard times. He helps us when we call upon His

name. There are so many things we need during the course of this life. GOD WILL PROVIDE.

5. **True faith, living faith LEADS TO ACTION.** In EVERY example given in Hebrews 11, the faith of an individual led to **DOING** SOMETHING. If a person has true faith, that faith will lead to action. If someone does not take action, it is a clue that he does not have faith, or as James puts it, that his faith is dead (not living, inactive⁴).

Faith and confession/action are inseparably linked.

If we do not understand and accept this, we will always be confused about why it seems our prayers are not answered. Faith does not shake a fist at God when we don't get our way. Faith COMES through hearing of God's love for us and of what He has done and promised. If we have the false concept that God is against us, we cannot have faith. If we never hear of the good He has provided and promised, we cannot have faith. Some stop here and want God to just do the rest. THIS IS NOT HOW GOD HAS SET UP HIS KINGDOM OF FAITH. EVERY example here in Chapter 11 declares this most clearly. FAITH LEADS TO ACTION. WITHOUT CONFESSION/ACTION our faith is incomplete/dead.

James 2:14-26

*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," **but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?** ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." **Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.** ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** ²² **Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?** ²³ And the Scripture was **fulfilled** which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ **You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.**

⁴ Nekros: Thayer Definition:

1) properly

- 1a) one that has breathed his last, lifeless
- 1b) deceased, departed, one whose soul is in heaven or hell
- 1c) destitute of life, without life, inanimate

2) metaphorically

- 2a) spiritually dead
 - 2a1) destitute of a life that recognises and is devoted to God, because given up to trespasses and sins
 - 2a2) inactive as respects doing right
- 2b) destitute of force or power, inactive, inoperative

²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, **so faith without works is dead also.**

- a. To understand this concept without veering off into heresy, let us consider some obvious examples. First of all in Romans 10:9-10 we read that “with the heart one believes unto righteousness and WITH THE HEART CONFESSION (of Jesus as the Lord) is made unto salvation.” One might believe that Jesus is risen from the dead, but unless that person confesses that Jesus is the Lord (that He is God), that person is not saved. The confession is the action that take place AS A RESULT OF ONE’S FAITH. If someone doesn’t confess Jesus as the Lord, his/her faith is dead. True faith leads to action.
 - b. One might believe that God answers prayer, but Jesus told us to “ask, seek, and knock”. There is a big difference from believing God CAN answer prayer, and actually ASKING Him to do something. We can believe until the day we die, but true faith will result in doing something. In this case, asking, seeking, and knocking.
 - c. In the case given here in James, what profit is your faith to a person in need, if your faith does not lead to action? Simply saying, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” is not true faith. What we do proves that we have faith.
6. We cannot make ourselves righteous or holy by what we do. Jesus accomplished this for us by His blood. HOWEVER, our faith causes us to live righteous and holy lives. If someone says, “I don’t have to do anything as a believer,” that person has missed this glorious truth. As believers we are new creations, created for good works. ALL TRUE BELIEVERS WILL BE INVOLVED IN GOOD WORKS. We supernaturally WANT TO OBEY GOD. We supernaturally WANT to live in such a way that pleases God. We want to know and do His will.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

7. A personal example for us would be, God spoke to Cathy asking her if she was willing to preach the gospel to the saved. She said, “Yes, Lord, I am willing”. David heard this good news and received it as a calling for us both. What if we had just sat on our couch and done nothing? No, we took steps forward in attempts to discover what God would have us DO. As soon as we knew that we were to teach the gift of righteousness by grace through faith, we started having meetings in our home in Vallejo. When given the opportunity to teach in the home of some friends in Chico, we accepted. We prepared lessons which involved many hours of diligent study and work. We got in our car and drove to Chico every week. WE DID THIS BY FAITH in His calling. We could not make people “hear” the truth. That was God’s work. But we could open our mouths and share the good news. Would God have brought this truth to the people to whom we now minister if we had just stayed home? Yes, of course! But it would not have been through us that they would have heard. We would have missed the joy of discovering the works to which he’d called us. We are saved by grace through faith, and not of works, but we are created for good works, each of us is created for good works.
8. All around us are examples of those who are walking by grace through faith. Following are true stories with the names removed.

- *By faith, _____ and _____, prepared lessons, and went to a strange land to teach people who didn't even know what they were going to say, fully confident that the grace which had changed their lives would change the lives of others.*
- *By faith, _____ refused to have migraine headaches knowing God had not given them to him and was healed of them.*
- *By faith, _____ spoke to her nearly daily headaches to be removed and to be cast into the sea and the cause of them, and she no longer has daily headaches. (Glory to God!!!!)*
- *By faith, three-year-old _____ confessed, "Jesus healed me, Mommy," and she never had a food allergy again.*
- *By faith, _____ walked on water for her prodigal son and saw him return to the Lord.*
- *By faith, _____ and _____, prepared gifts for the homeless and shared the love of God.*
- *By faith, _____ gave of their time and money to see the work of SGF prosper.*
- *By faith, _____ lying motionless after having been in a car accident, instead of fearing for her life, praised God knowing she would be saved and healed. She received strength to live and be whole.*
- *By faith, _____ and _____, who were barely making it financially, believed that God is good, that he wasn't trying to teach them a lesson by the hard times they were suffering, and put their trust in Him, and not only received a high-paying job for _____, and healing for his body nearly broken to pieces, but were able to buy a new house, not just a new house, but a beautiful new house.*
- *By faith those who have been homeless have believed God for a home and are now in one.*
- *By faith, _____ shares this good news of God's grace with his/her family and friends.*
- *By faith, _____ started a Bible study to share this good news.*
- *By faith, _____ purchased and gave away grace and faith materials.*
- *By faith, others have stepped out into what looked impossible, and have gone where they never believed before that they could go.*
- *By faith, _____ share their talents and income with others so that they may be blessed.*
- *By faith, _____ took care of his/her aging parents, providing for them as they needed.*
- *By faith, _____ encouraged his/her children in tangible ways, showing their love and faith with actions.*
- *By faith, _____ and _____ endured persecutions for preaching the gospel of grace, being falsely accused, rejected, and ill-treated, but have not retreated, believing that obedience to the gospel of grace is of more value that compromising it.*

- *By faith, others continue to believe that God will do what He has promised to do, even though their circumstances speak to the contrary. They continue to believe in God's goodness, in His faithfulness. Instead of accusing God of not doing what He said He would, they give glory to God and thank Him that He WILL DO WHAT HE HAS PROMISED, that he WILL provide for their needs, that He WILL heal their body, that he WILL help them endure persecutions, that He WILL reward them as they seek Him. They refuse to complain, but instead praise their God for his loving intentions toward them and His faithfulness to His promises. When adversity comes their way, they know it is not from God, and they know He will somehow work even adversity for their good.*
9. **FAITH PLEASES GOD.** We cannot state this enough. Our Father is filled with JOY when He sees us walking in faith in Him, when He sees us doing acts of faith through Him. IT BRINGS HIM JOY!!! We all want to please God. Let us consider how greatly it pleases God when we believe in Him. What will YOUR faith in God and his faithfulness to do what He has promised lead YOU to DO? Allow the LIVING faith in God in you to propel you into ACTION.
- Matthew 17:20**
Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.
- Mark 9:23**
All things are possible to him who believes.