

God Will Provide Himself a Lamb

By
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“ . . . God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering ” (Genesis 22:8).

Coming down to us from the distant past is the unique experience of one of the great men of the Old Testament. It is one of those strange experiences that makes one shudder at the implications involved. It is so extreme and ruthless in its nature until the whole tenor of it borders on heathenism. To read it all is to look into the broken heart of a loving God and see his only begotten son dying on dark Calvary.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, had discovered God in Ur of the Chaldees and had left all to follow him. His obedience to God had led him out of the fertile valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, across the wind-swept plains of the Arabian desert, down into Egypt, and finally into Palestine, the land of promise.

These long journeys had brought him nothing but the consciousness that God was leading him and was vitally interested in his well being. His prolonged solitudes with his Maker had taught him that it paid in a thousand ways to follow God. God loved him and was a present help in the time of need. God had made Abraham many promises and tested his faith, but God had always been true to what he said. He had promised him a son in his old age, and when hopes for this were passed, Isaac was born.

Cherished and revived in the presence of his young son, Abraham dreamed of an earth populated with his children in uncounted generations. While this aged, nomadic wanderer dreamed of kingdoms, thrones, and nations, God spoke to him in the silent watches of the night and said, “Abraham, I want you to offer up Isaac, thine only son as a sacrifice to me.” God had spoken to Abraham many times before, but never had it left

him so cold and hopeless. It was indeed a great sacrifice for him to leave his homeland as a young man and go out with an uncertain destination. It was indeed a great effort to be on the move always, just a wanderer in the earth, but no price had ever cost him so much as the request to sacrifice his son.

This supreme test was the greatest of his life, but even in this, Abraham was faithful. He made everything ready, prepared the wood, sharpened the knife, ascended the mountain, built the altar, and bound Isaac, laying him upon the altar. The great crisis had come, a moment of severe tension. I think that in everyone's life there is at least one extreme crisis, one supreme decision, one high water mark, one exalted peak around which the rest of life only ebbs and flows.

It came to Pontius Pilate that day when Jesus stood before him on trial for his life.

It came to Governor Felix when Paul preached to him the Gospel and he trembled, but yet waited for a more convenient season.

When our time comes, our reaction in that one supreme moment determines the extent, the height and depth, of our life forever after.

That which made it more heart rendering to Abraham were the stabbing words of Isaac at the crucial moment: "Here is the wood, the fire, and the altar, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham stood like a man turned to stone, for not until this moment had he revealed to Isaac that he was the one to die. In the terrible depths of his soul, he falteringly reached outward and upward for the powers of another world. Forced by this crisis that threatened to crush his own stout heart, he repeated the immortal words that had been the only hope for a lost world: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Just as the knife was raised to descend with unswerving obedience, God stopped him and pointed to a ram caught in the thicket. God said, "Touch not thy son, but kill the ram instead." Thus, did this great man of faith prove that God could not fail him in a crisis. This daring feat of that ancient herdsman is one of the most courageous deeds of all time. But even this fades into insignificance when we think of another Father and another Son debating the terrible transactions that alone will redeem a lost world.

It was yonder in Paradise long ago, standing amid the gathering gloom of an evening sun. God waited – waited for the man to come to their favorite meeting place. Crouched in the shadows with the darkness of hell settling about them were Adam and Eve awaiting the stroke of the sword that would fall as a penalty for their sins. Not only were they doomed, but all the world after them.

They were bound by Satan, laid upon the altar of sacrifice, helpless to save themselves. Someone had to die to appease the wrath of an offended God. A sacrifice had to be produced. The sins of the world were crying for blood, the blood of the sacrificial victim. This victim had to be free from sin, pure and without blemish. The flock of earth was searched. No man was found that was worthy to die for the sins of man. All the world appeared before God guilty.

Something had to be done. The altar was prepared, the wood was ready, the fire was burning, the knife was sharp, but where was the sacrifice? No man on earth could do it. The angels in Heaven could not. The tenants of Hell could not. The destiny of the world was hanging in the balance. Justice pauses one moment as if gathering force to blot this world out of existence, and then, then did God the Father snatch from off the altar a

dying world. Exclaiming as he did so, “I will provide himself a Lamb for a burnt offering.”

Thus, we see the most gruesome spectacle that ever marred the face of a sinful world. We think that the virtual sacrifice of Abraham’s son was the outgrowth of a pagan mind. What then do you think of the ruthless massacre of the spotless Lamb of God on a Roman cross? Abraham was stopped before the fatal stroke fell upon his son, but there was no one to take the place of Jesus on the cross. He was God’s lamb, the provision for the sacrificial offering. He had to drink the bitter cup. He had to taste death for every man. The sword had to fall. The blood had to be poured out. He had to die, to die a death for thousands upon thousands.

Die until death had no more dominion over him.

Die until justice was satisfied.

Die until the world was reconciled to God.

Die until all sin was atoned.

Die until his soul was made an offering for sin.

Die until the sinner was justified, until the believer was sanctified.

Die, die, die – until the question of sin was settled in totality.

Die until every wound of sin was healed.

Die until the chasm was forever bridged between God and man.

Die until Heaven resounds with the shouts of the redeemed.

Die until peace shall reign in every heart and love without limit.

God alone could do this. No other lamb was sufficient. No other blood was so pure. God himself provided the lamb for the offering. His name was Jesus.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains:
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its pow'r,
Till all the ransomed Church of God be saved to sin no more:
Be saved to sin no more, be saved to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed Church of God be saved to sin no more.

-William Cowper