

HEROES OF THE FAITH, THEN AND NOW

Eternal Pictures from Abraham & Isaac

TEXT: Heb. 11:17-19

INTRODUCTION: What an honor to be listed in God's Hall of Faith. What an honor to be considered by the Holy Spirit to be a man or woman of such heroic faith that your faith can be lifted before other believers as a model and an example. But what if one person were listed twice? Surely that would be even more than a double honor, and surely if it were so, we ought to pay all the more careful attention to the faith they portray. Well, it is so. Abraham is listed twice. First, he is listed with Sarah because he obeyed God and went where God told him to go. Then Abraham sojourned in the promised land knowing that his real home was his eternal home which God would give to him by grace through faith. But secondly, Abraham is listed in combination with Isaac, not for a new character trait that was not previously revealed in Abraham, but because what God did through these two men offered for men throughout the ages an eternal portrait of God's greatest masterpiece. I have entitled this message, "Eternal Pictures from Abraham and Isaac." Let me invite you to read this brief but very powerful text with me, and I ask you to watch for the pictures being painted through the faith and obedience of Abraham and Isaac.

Hebrews 11:17-19 ¹⁷ 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.

To understand the fullness of the message pictured here, you must know the story of Gen. 22.

I. IN ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE WE HAVE A PICTURE OF THE NECESSITY OF A SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

A. Isaac was to be a burnt offering.

B. A burnt offering was a sacrifice for sin. (Lev. 1:3-5)

C. See here a picture of the price of sin.

1. Society, then and now, thinks sin to be a little thing, easily recompensed, easily atoned. Not so!
2. See the anguish of a father who is called upon to take the life of his own son.

- a. his “only” - his all, his hope for the fulfilling of the covenant promises
- b. whom he loved
- 3. And why?
 - a. For Abraham’s sin
 - b. and Sarah’s
 - c. and Isaac’s
 - d. and Hagar and Ishmael
 - e. and Lot and his family
 - f. and the others of Abraham’s household
- 4. **An aside - The only thing that enabled Abraham to bear it was that he believed in the resurrection. (Heb. 11:19)**
- 5. **But the main point that we should see clearly here is the awful price of sin.**
 - a. When I was a boy, before my dad was saved, my dad walked out on a preacher preaching this text.
 - b. In my immaturity, I thought dad just did not understand.
 - c. That was true, but I did not understand either. In fact, dad understood better than I did.
 - d. He at least understood the cavern of emptiness in a man’s soul, filled with echoes of anguish that reverberated in the aching chambers of his heart when a man has to even contemplate that he must take the life of his son.
 - e. Try to imagine that pain. Try to imagine that grief. Try to imagine that hurt. That is the price of sin. That is the cost of sin.

Thus far, the picture is a dark one, and looking upon it brings despair. Let us look to another part. Next we see a lamb, a young ram caught in the thicket nearby.

II. IN THE LAMB WE HAVE A PICTURE OF CHRIST WHO DIED AS OUR SUBSTITUTE.

- A. God sees the faith of Abraham and stops him.**
- B. Sin still has a cost; blood must be shed.**
- C. But God provides a sacrifice to be a substitute for Abraham’s son.**
- D. All of this took place on one of the peaks of Moriah.**
 - 1. Do you know what one of the peaks of Moriah was later named?**
 - 2. In Hebrew: Golgotha!**
 - 3. In Latin: Calvary!**

E. The lamb of Moriah is a picture of the Lamb of Calvary, the Lord Jesus Christ.

F. He is the substitute for us and for our sons and daughters.

1. If not for Christ,
 - a. Each of our children would have to die to pay the price for their own sin.
 - b. Each of us would have to die to pay the price for our sin.
 - c. Without exception; without relief.
2. Because of Christ,
 - a. The relief of the anguish of your heart that the lives of your children shall not be required for payment for your sins or theirs.
 - b. Remember: that anguish was not eliminated. It was transferred to our Heavenly Father.
 - c. Listen again to the words the Father spoken to Abraham and hear them as God speaks those words to Himself. "Take your Son, your only Son, whom you love, to the land of Moriah and offer him there."
 - d. If you feel the anguish of the heart of our Heavenly Father, you can better understand

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.

III. IN ISAAC WE HAVE A PICTURE OF A MAN, SAVED BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, WITH HIS ALL ON THE ALTAR, GIVEN TO GOD.

- A. Isaac was a young man, not a child.**
- B. Therefore, he was a willing sacrifice.**
- C. The lamb was a substitute for him personally.**
- D. He was literally saved by the blood of the lamb.**
- E. Isaac pictures Rom 12:1 for us as believers.**

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*

1. Are your hands on the altar as a living sacrifice?
2. feet?
3. mind?
4. eyes?

Jim Elliot was a man who laid his body on the altar as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

The life and death of Jim Elliot is a testimony of a man committed to the will of God. He sought God's will, pleaded for it, waited for it, and—most importantly—obeyed it. His martyrdom at age twenty-eight and subsequent books on his life by his former wife, Elisabeth Elliot, have been the catalyst for sending thousands into the mission fields and stoking the fires of a heart for God. He was an intense Christian, bent on pleasing God alone and not man.

Elliot was a gifted writer, speaker, and teacher. He had a commanding presence while a student at Wheaton, even starring on the wrestling mat where he became a champion. Many of his friends were convinced Elliot's spiritual giftedness should be concentrated on building up the church in America. Elliot, however, wanted God's will, not man's. After many protracted and solitary prayer sessions, Elliot sensed God's call to a foreign field, specifically South America. **"Why should some hear twice," he said, "when others have not heard [the gospel] once?"**

Correspondence with a former missionary to Ecuador and hearing of a tribe—the Aucas—that was never reached with the news of Christ's redemption set his course. In the winter of 1952, Elliot and a friend who shared his vision set sail on a freighter, the Santa Juana, for the jungles of South America.

Elliot's focus on obedience to God's will led to a disciplined and slightly unorthodox courtship of Betty Howard, whom he met at Wheaton. They longed to be husband and wife, but Elliot would not agree to the marriage yoke until he was certain of God's plan.

Elisabeth and Jim both were called to Ecuador as missionaries. Almost one year after arriving, they were finally engaged. On October 8, 1953, they were married in a civil ceremony in Quito, Ecuador. After their wedding, Elliot continued his work among the Quichua Indians and formulated plans to reach the Aucas.

In the Autumn of 1955, missionary pilot Nate Saint spotted an Auca village. During the ensuing months, Elliot and several fellow missionaries dropped gifts from a plane, attempting to befriend the hostile tribe. In January of 1956, Elliot and four companions landed on a beach of the Curaray River in eastern Ecuador. They had several friendly contacts with the fierce tribe that had previously killed several Shell Oil company employees.

Two days later, on January 8, 1956, all five men were speared and hacked to death by warriors from the Auca tribe. Life magazine featured a ten-page article on their mission

and death. "They learned about the Aucas as they and their wives were ministering to the Quichua-speaking and Jivaro Indians. The Aucas had killed all strangers for centuries. "Other Indians fear them but the missionaries were determined to reach them. Said Elliot: **'Our orders are: the Gospel to every creature.'**"

Elliot wanted God's will. It ended in his death, but it was a death whose seed still brings forth fruit for the gospel's sake. Many Aucas eventually came to accept Christ as Savior when Elisabeth Elliot bravely returned to share Christ with those who killed her husband. Her books, *Shadow of the Almighty* and *Through Gates of Splendor*, speak passionately of the power, majesty, and sovereignty of God while chronicling the life of her husband.

(Summary provide by In Touch Ministries)

"God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one." – Jim Elliot

CONCLUSION: If you have come to faith in Christ, this portrait, drawn by the faith of Abraham and Isaac, is you. You are Isaac, condemned to die because of sin but rescued by Christ, the Lamb of God, your substitute who was killed in your place. Now you must decide whether you will become a living sacrifice whose body is given back to the Lord as a living sacrifice to worship and serve Him.

Those who have never come to Christ are Isaac also, justly condemned and ready to die. Christ has already died, but His death substitutes for theirs only when they trust in Him.

Romans 10:9-10 ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.