



Bare Bones Series (BBS)

An Apologetic of Genesis 22

Session Two

In our previous session, we talked about why God was not sinning by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

In this session, let's talk about Abraham and why he was not sinning by obeying God's command. The reason Abraham did not sin is because He is under the moral authority of God. Just like the previous question, I think this one also needs some explanation.

When God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son, Abraham is under a moral obligation to do what God says. This again is based on who God is as the Moral Authority for everything in creation.

We have a picture of this in the workplace where the boss can tell the employee how he wants things done and he has the authority to do so, and the employee is supposed to submit to that authority.

The same is true for parents and children. If a parent says a child cannot spend the night with a friend, they have the moral authority to make that decision, and the child is expected to obey.

Even though God has the authority and the right to command this of Abraham, God does not force Abraham to do it. God has made him to be a free, moral agent. Even so, Abraham chooses to obey God, which he should do because God is his moral authority. Actually, Abraham would be sinning if he failed to do what God said. So, Abraham did not sin by obeying God.

You almost can't say what I just said without addressing the issue of all the loonies out there who think God is telling them to do crazy things. By defending Abraham in obeying God, I am not providing a license for everyone who thinks God told them to do something.

For example, if you are hearing this and thinking, "I think God is telling me to sacrifice my son too," I can tell you, with great confidence, that He is not. That kind of thinking is not coming from God. The specific thing God asked Abraham to do was a "one time only" event.

Secondly, Abraham is not just hearing voices in his head which he thinks is God. The LORD had actually appeared to Abraham and spoken with him when he told Abraham about the birth of Isaac, so Abraham knew when it was God speaking to him and when it was not.

So what about the problem that the Bible prohibits sacrificing people as part of religious worship: how do we say that it is okay for God to violate His own word?

First of all, when God commands something, it is morally acceptable to do it, even if it normally violates an accepted norm or law. We have instances when we can violate some law and it is acceptable to do so. For example, it is against the law to run through a red light. But, let's say you are part of a funeral procession, where a police officer is waving the procession of cars through the light, even when it is red. It is then perfectly fine to violate that law because this situation is very different from what normally is happening. As an officer, he has the civil authority to make an exception to the rule of what happens at a red light and you are right to obey him. In fact, if you disobey him, then you are breaking the law!

In the same way it would be morally right to obey a command of God, when apart from God's command, it would normally not be okay. And in the case of Abraham attempting to sacrifice his son, God had some very definite reasons for asking Abraham to do something that otherwise, God would never approve of. In fact, that is how the Bible presents this, as a one-time event which God will never again ask anyone to do.

Saying that Abraham should obey God's command is based on God's real and true authority over His creation. The other thing is that God is the source of our moral imperatives. So when God tells Abraham to do this, Abraham rightly obeys.

As a believer in Christ, I cannot reject the tenant that God has ultimate authority over life and death. I also hold to the idea that one of the things God is doing with Abraham (not the main thing, but an important thing nonetheless) is to lay the groundwork to change how people think about human sacrifices to the gods.

The world which did not worship the God of Israel was used to the idea of sacrificing their children to their deity. It was everywhere. When God commanded this of Abraham, this was not the first time he had heard of such a thing. But, what God is going to do is interrupt the actual sacrifice of Isaac, in order to establish a boundary to prohibit this kind of practice among men.

What happens when Abraham attempts to sacrifice his son? God stops him, and provides a ram to take Isaac's place. It was never God's intention for Abraham to kill Isaac. Now, it is true that the Scriptures spoke against this kind of thing, but the scriptures for this had not yet been written. Abraham did not have the book of Deuteronomy to look at.

Let's skip forward in time a bit, to when the nation has been formed. What does God say at the time of the Exodus out of Egypt?

Exodus 13:2 Sanctify unto me **all the firstborn**, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: **it is mine**.

So God is saying that when a man has a firstborn son, he belongs to God. In the heathen religions, they would sacrifice that son to their false god. But God is going to tell His people, that firstborn son belongs to me, but you aren't going to sacrifice him as an offering to me, you are going to "redeem" by sacrificing an animal instead – just like what happened with Abraham and Isaac; God provided a ram instead.

Exodus 13:11 And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,¹² That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and **every firstling** that cometh of a beast which thou hast; **the males shall be the LORD'S.**¹³ And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: **and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.**

Now think about that.

Exodus 13:14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *is* this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:¹⁵ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore **I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.**¹⁶ And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.

What is being said here? God is teaching them to redeem their firstborn sons with a lamb and not to sacrifice them to Him. He doesn't want that. Do you see how, in a time of ignorance, before there were written scriptures to look at, God educated them in this issue, beginning with Abraham? God took Abraham from the common practice of every people group he had ever known and corrected the sacrifice of children, of humans.

Then, as the nation gets ready to enter into Canaan, every people group there is sacrificing their children to false gods. But now, God has given them a written revelation that prohibits such acts. The foundation for these scriptures in Exodus 13 is in the event with Abraham.

Also take a look at Deuteronomy 18 and 12.

Deuteronomy 18:9 When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.** ¹⁰ **There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or** that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, ¹¹ Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ¹² For **all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD:** and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. ¹³ Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. ¹⁴ For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

Deuteronomy 12:30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. ³¹ Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. ³² What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

God even tells them that if a prophet of God comes to them but he tells them to do things contrary to what is written, then they are not to obey him; he does not speak for God.

As you think about the story of Abraham and Isaac, do not lose sight of the fact that God did not allow the sacrifice to happen. But, it was actually a prophetic event, and Abraham saw it that way too.

Genesis 22:7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? ⁸ And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:** so they went both of them together.

When you read that, think about the “lamb of God” that God sent to bear the sins of the world. This has a double meaning; God not only provided a replacement for Isaac but God also provided His Son as a Lamb that would take away the sins of the world.

But I want us to stop here and think about the price of our sin. Because He is just, God cannot simply say He forgives all the sins of mankind; there must be justice. Sin demands a price. If you want to measure the love of God, then think about what God did for all people when He allowed His Son to be sacrificed for even His enemies.

While the skeptics and detractors want to make a big deal out of God telling Abraham to sacrifice his son, they don't make a peep when it comes to God sacrificing His Son for their sins.