

# When God Preached the Gospel to Abraham

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Galatians 3; Genesis 22

**Preached on:** Sunday, November 4, 2012

## **Anchored in Truth Ministries**

1915 Avalon Ave.

Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

**Website:** [www.anchoredintruth.org](http://www.anchoredintruth.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth](http://www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth)

We saw this morning the truth in the Transfiguration that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets and I got to thinking about that this week and I thought I might want to look at some of the glories of revelation concerning Jesus in the old part of the book, the Old Testament. But first I want you to turn to Galatians 3 and look at verse 8. Galatians 3:8, the Apostle Paul arguing his case before the Galatian church who has been infiltrated by Judaizers and other false teachers trying to push the Galatians into a synchronizing of grace and works which is impossible. You put works in it, you lose grace. You put works in it, you lose the Gospel. And he's arguing to them how even from Old Testament days, Christ was preached and faith, salvation by faith, grace through faith rather, alone in Christ was the only true message of salvation.

So look at it there in Galatians 3. Why don't we just start in verse 6 to get the flow of the context. Galatians 3:6, "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now, that would be a shocking thing for some hardcore Judaizers who want to bring works, particularly the works given through the law of Moses, the works they would say expounded by Abraham and the other patriarch fathers, for Paul, a Jew, to come out and say, "Abraham was saved not by works, not by the old covenant of law, but by grace. He believed God and it was counted to him, it was laid to his case, stated as his status, righteousness."

Now, look on further, verse 7, "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing," that's the Old Testament foreseeing even, you could say, prophesying forth, "that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'" So the Apostle Paul writes to these New Testament believers in Galatia that God preached the Gospel to your Jewish heritage forefather, Abraham.

Now, let's go and look at this. Look at Genesis 22, if you would. Genesis 22, and just to tie in what he said particularly in Galatians 3:8, look at verse 18. Genesis 22:18. Now, we're going to look at most of the chapter but for right now look at verse 18. He says, "In your seed," God is speaking now to Abraham, "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Now, that quote of the last part of that verse is in Galatians 3:8, "All the nations will be blessed through you." In other words, Abraham was a type. The seed of the Gospel is in Abraham, the type was pictured in

Abraham, and Jesus is the fruit, not the seed; he's the fruition and he's not the type; he's the anti-type. All the Old Testament pointed to Christ and then, of course, the New Testament revealed him. As someone has said, Christ is in the Old Testament concealed, he's in the New Testament revealed. And he's in the Old Testament contained, he is in the New Testament explained.

Now, let's look at all this together. What a powerful and vivid picture of Christ. We hadn't looked at this in many, many years. Look at Genesis 22, and let's begin in verse 1.

1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will 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 wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. 9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD [I believe that's Christ] called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing 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 raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." 15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed 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."

Let's look at the vivid and wondrous picture of the Lord Jesus Christ here in this whole scenario of God now having brought Abraham to his fourth crisis surrendering point. In Genesis 12, God first told Abraham, "I want you to leave your native land." And that was a difficult one but he took off and left everything behind, but he fudged on that commitment a little bit and he took Lot along with him for companionship. And then God in Genesis 13 says, "Now you've got to give up your companionship with Lot." Abraham surrendered some to that but he didn't have a full surrender before God. God had promised him he would have descendents as numerous as the sands on the seashore and the stars in the heaven and he thought, "My wife, Sarah, is barren and I'm very old. We can't have a child." So he took Sarah's advice and took her maidservant, Hagar, and had a child by Hagar, Ishmael. Then God, Genesis 17, calls Abraham in and he says, "Now you've got to scratch all your plans for Ishmael." So Abraham had to surrender again. Now we come to Genesis 22 and finally Abraham is broken. Finally he surrendered. He quit figuring out how he can help God and get around what God is saying and just do what God says. And sure enough he does that. God says, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love. Take him up on the mount Moriah and there sacrifice him to me." And that's the story that we have in Genesis 22.

So the Gospel is powerfully unfolded in this scenario before Abraham and before all of us but isn't it interesting that God brings the Gospel out very clearly once Abraham is surrendered and ready to hear it. That's very much like my own testimony. I know I heard things about the Gospel and of the Gospel. I was not a church goer, but I had people that shared with me. I was at a football camp in Louisiana and there were some professional players there and one of them shared his testimony. I remember that about the saving, but I just didn't hear it. But there was one night in my car, February of my freshman year in college, driving back to Middle Tennessee State University and a Presbyterian preacher on the radio, I believe in media ministry, on the radio shared the basics of the Gospel, but that night I heard it. I had heard it before but that night I heard it and was wondrously converted.

Well, here the Gospel is poured out before Abraham in this event. Notice how we see Christ here. First of all, notice Isaac's birth was a miraculous birth. Remember, he had, Abraham had already tried to have a child through his wife's maidservant thinking, "This will be the child of promise. Through this child I will have many descendents and be the father of a great nation, the way the Lord has promised." And then God said, "No, Ishmael that you have had through your maidservant is not going to be the child of promise. Your wife Sarah shall bear a child." Now, she's very, very advanced in age. It was a miraculous conception and that's the same way our Lord came. He came through a miracle conception. Mary was visited by the Spirit of God and Christ was made in her womb. Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God.

But secondly, the text tells us that Isaac was Abraham's only son. Notice how it's worded here over and over. Look at verse 2, God speaks and says, he said, "Take now your son," here it is, "your only son." Jump down to verse 12, he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have

not withheld your son, your only son." Then verse 16 again, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son." Now, if you want to bring that over into the Greek language and translate it over into the English, do you know how that would word? Your only begotten son. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." That's the phrase here in the Hebrew. His only begotten son. Isn't it interesting how the text wants to bring that out over and over. This is not just any son, this is the son of a miracle conception. This is your one and only, your special unique son, just as Jesus was the one and only true, special, unique Son of the living God.

Also, the special love of Abraham for Isaac. In verse 2 the text says of Genesis 22, he said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love." Now, you can imagine being what? A hundred years of age before he had his first son and you've got to understand this culture. I guess families today want a son to carry on the family name but in this day and in this time, if your wife didn't produce for you a son to carry on the family name, she was a total failure and she lived in shame and disdain the rest of the days of her life if she could not have a male child, and the husband felt like a complete failure also because he had no one to carry on his name among the people of God and in the heritage of Israel. So when Isaac finally was born and Abraham's got a son and he came by a miracle and he came through Isaac's true wife, Sarah, he loved this boy more than you could possibly imagine. I think he loved Ishmael also, but not like he loved Isaac.

And brothers and sisters, you've got to understand something: there is a love by God the Father for God the Son, Jesus Christ, beyond anything we will ever be able to comprehend. A million years in heaven with the perfected understanding and we will still not be able to grasp the great, great love of the Godhead. God the Father's love for God the Son. It is special. We read sections like John 17 where Jesus in incredible, insightful and beautiful language, pours out his heart in his high priestly prayer and in that high priestly prayer talks about the union and the communion and the intimacy and the love that he has with his heavenly Father. That's pictured here. By the way, Abraham is spoken of as having this special love for Isaac who, of course, Isaac is the type or the picture of Christ.

The fourth thing here, notice: the trust of Isaac toward his father, Abraham. What a trust we see here. Look at verse 7, "Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering.' So the two of them walked on together." Jesus, as we just saw in Luke 9, is up on a mountain. The Bible text says that he was praying there and then he was transfigured and glorified before the apostles and Moses and Elijah are there and they are glorified with him. It's an amazing scene but immediately the text tells us that the whole scene revolves around Jesus going to die. Moses and Elijah are discussing with Christ his coming departure at Jerusalem. It leaves no doubt to what's being discussed. When you talk about Christ going to Jerusalem for his departure, you're talking about Christ going to the cross. And Jesus never shrunk back. He never hesitated. He was dedicated to the Father's will and trusted him completely to go to that cross, and here we

see that beautifully pictured as Isaac says, "Dad, there's the fire and there's the burnt offering but where's the lamb?" Abraham says, "God will take care of that, son." And here they go on up the mountain together.

Isaac willfully surrendered to the will of his father. In verse 9, notice what it says, "they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood." The text doesn't elaborate but every indication is that Isaac was completely surrendered to the will of his father and isn't that exactly what our Lord prayed in the garden of Gethsemane when he was wrestling and we can speculate it a thousand and one things and perhaps what our Lord was thinking about, what was on his mind and going through his heart as he's sweating drops of blood, the Bible text says there in the garden of Gethsemane the night he's betrayed. But we do know one thing for certain, he prayed, "Father, not my will but thy will be done." You've got to understand something: Genesis 22 was written almost 2,000 years before Jesus was born. 2,000 years. You could never have figured out these parallels. Only God could have written that and here Isaac is showing complete submission and surrender to the will of his father.

Also, we see here Abraham had a belief and a confidence that God would raise Isaac from the dead. Look at verse 5. He knows he's going up there to sacrifice his son, but notice what he says. "Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.'" We will worship and we will return. I do not know that Abraham understood all that was going to happen or understand even the truths of a resurrection but he was confident, "God is going to provide. I'm just going to obey him." You know, that's a challenge for all of us. Folks, there are many things in the Christian pilgrimage, there are many things in your discipleship where everything in your human logic will say, "This will not work. It just won't work." But you have to trust God's going to make it work.

Abraham takes his son, Isaac, and he loves this boy more than you can possibly think. He waited a hundred years for him and God said, "Now take him and sacrifice him to me." And Abraham says, "You men stay back. Me and the boy are going but we're coming back." What a picture. What a picture. Jesus said in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it back up again." He wasn't talking about the literal, physical temple that was there in Jerusalem at that point, he was talking about the temple of his body. He knew he was coming back. Abraham, no matter how crude his understanding, knew that his son would be presented back to him.

Also we note here that Isaac carried the sacrificial wood on his own back. Look at verse 6, "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together." The Scripture says that the Lord Jesus in John 19:17, went out bearing, went out bearing the wood of the cross on his back. What a picture, a vivid picture of Christ.

Isaac was laid on top of the wood. Verse 9, "Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son

Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood." When the Lord Jesus was crucified, the common way of crucifixion is while the cross is laying there horizontal on the ground, you are laid on top of the wood, and there the nails are driven through your hands and there the nails are driven through your feet. And then they would have a hole in the ground and those Roman soldiers, probably using ropes and pushing with their hands, would bring that cross up and that vertical beam would plunge down into that hole, but the nails in the hands and the feet would support the body so that it would not fall off. Isaac pictures Christ being laid on top of the wood as the sacrifice.

Isaac was sacrificed on a hill. Verse 2, God says to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." A mountain range God made, and God made a little hill outside of Jerusalem called Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, and that's where Jesus was sacrificed.

Notice, Isaac was accompanied by two men in verses 3 through 5, "Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men." The only one involved in all of this event is Abraham, the father, Isaac, the son, and two other men. What happens on Calvary's cross? There's God, the Father, and God, the Son, and two thieves on either side of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaac and Abraham, however, present the sacrifice alone. At one point, the men are left behind. Verse 5, "Abraham said to his young men, 'Now you stay here. You've gone far enough. Stay here with the donkey and I and the lad will go over there and we will worship.'" I love that phrase. This is a worship. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word for "worship" is akin to the Hebrew word for "service." Now, you know a lot of people get caught up in, "Well, worship is just when it feels great and we're lathered up in here." That's wonderful worship. I love that. That's a great part of our worship, but worship is also when you get up on Monday morning and you serve the Lord. They are both worship. As a matter of fact, you don't have much in corporate praise if you don't have practical service. They are both worship.

So Abraham leaves the two men behind and Abraham takes the son, Isaac, and they go to a place by themselves to do this work God has called them to do, to sacrifice the son, Isaac, on the cross. The Scriptures tell us in the Gospels that God brought darkness on Calvary as Jesus was hanging there. I believe it was an utter blackness, that even the two thieves on the cross, the two men accompanying Jesus, if you will, could not enter into what was going on. Listen to me: when Jesus died for the sins of God's children, it was a work between God the Father and God the Son alone. No one else was to enter in that work. "No one knows how dark the night or how deep the waters crossed, ere he found his sheep that was lost." This is the work of God the Son and God the Father alone.

Abraham was to do the slaying of Isaac. Look at verse 6, if you will, "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, then Abraham took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together." Now, here the fire is always an emblem of the judgment of God and, by the way, this began, and then he's got a knife

also, a sword, and that's also an emblem of the judgment of God. What happened when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden? God put a flaming sword, the same idea, a flaming knife, guarding the way so they couldn't come back to the tree of life. That's a picture of judgment. And then fire and the sword of judgment is also a picture of judgment in the book of Revelation. There's the eternal wrath of God as sinners and Satan and the antichrist are plunged into the bottomless pit, a place of fire and torment. So here Abraham, the father, has the implements of judgment: he has fire and he has the knife.

If you will, look further in verse 7, "Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'" Of course, he said, "Well, God will provide the lamb."

I preached a sermon several years ago. It would be good to hear it again, entitled, "Why God killed his Son," because at the back of everything that happened on Calvary, Jews, malicious, vicious, hating, unbelieving Jews, falsely accused him. Pilate pronounced the verdict, "Crucify him." But Isaiah prophesied that when Jesus surrendered to the torment of the cross, he was smitten of God. God the Father killed his Son that the children might go free. Here Abraham doesn't hire a surrogate, doesn't look to a third-party. Abraham takes the knife and Abraham has the fire and Abraham laid the son on the wood. Abraham was killing his son because nothing else would picture what God would do through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ when he died for us. Yes, it's okay and it's proper to say that our sin nailed him there, in a sense, but not in the fullest sense. In the fullest sense, God the Father killed Jesus to purchase our redemption.

Abraham's understanding of sacrifice comes out so strongly here and the God-ward view of sacrifice. Look at verse 8, "Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'" You see, God had ordained or foreordained I think is a better way to say it, from the foundation of the world that he would save for himself a people that would have his righteousness and be with him and share his glory forever and ever and ever. You see, you've got to understand something and this is one reason why Baptists and other evangelicals have held to the eternal security of the believer or the perseverance of the saints which means that when you're truly converted or saved you never can lose your salvation. Why is that? Because God saved men for his own purposes. Your salvation is not first and foremost about you. It's first and foremost about God and his plan. God has a reason for his own glory to save a people and to bring about justly that conclusion or that end, God had to provide the just offering of sacrifice, and the only one qualified to pay for the sins of all of his children was his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So here the Father takes the Son providing for himself. His own justice must be satisfied against those he has chosen to be his own.

Do you understand how sovereign grace is essential to understand the purposes of God? If you don't see sovereignty and God's purposes behind all of this, if you see God does his part and man does his part and you never go beyond that, I don't know how you could ever have any peace or ever any security. How could you ever think God could keep you unless it was God himself who chose before the foundation of the world to provide your

justification through his Son's death on your behalf? God will provide for himself because he wants you with him forever. Now, here's what you do in your pride, "Yeah, me? Me? I'm wicked, I'm halting, I'm frail, I'm ungodly, I'm defiled." Yes, you're all of those things but God wants you so he will provide what is necessary for you to be righteous in his sight and he has.

It was the third day when Abraham grasped that his son would come back to be with him, a picture of the resurrection. Verses 3 and 4, "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 wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." Verse 4, "On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance." Just coincidence, you guess. It was on the third day, the morning of the third day, from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph over his foes. What a picture of Christ.

Also, Abraham could not see God's true sacrifice until God revealed him. Look at verse 13. He's already got his son up there. He has laid his son on the altar. He has bound him. He has got his knife up there. The glimmering of that knife shining in the sun or perhaps the moonlight. Then verse 13, "Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son." You know, no one really sees Jesus until God reveals him. Oh, you can study about him, you can contemplate on him, you can wash it around in your mind. It's the most amazing thing in the world to preach and witness and pray and encourage and command and beg and pray and preach and reveal, but until God opens their eyes, they will not see Christ. They just won't, and until God spoke and pointed Abraham where to look for the sacrifice, he didn't see him.

Well, the next thing, Abraham's descendents will multiply like the stars of the heavens and the sands on the sea. We see that in verses 16 and 17, another vivid picture of Christ. He said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son," in other words, through the obedience of your work with your son, something is going to happen. Verse 17, "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies." So here we have the picture of Christ and how Christ's obedience to the Father's plan and God blesses him and causes him to see as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53, he said, "You will see your offspring. Christ, you have come, you have obeyed, you have submitted to the Father's plan, you have died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and you're going to see a multiplication." Is it not true? How many millions through the ages now, down through these 2,000 years have come to know and are followers of Jesus Christ? As numerous as the sands on the seashore or the stars in the heavens.

Then lastly, Abraham's seed was to possess the gate of their enemy. Verse 17, "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed," singular there, "shall possess the gate of their enemies." Now, they did this in a literal, physical way. As a matter of



fact, I believe there is a two-part fulfillment to most of this: one part is for the nation of Israel, but the final full fulfillment is in Christ. He is the ultimate type that is pictured here and so we see that Jews as a literal people through Joshua's leadership possessing the gates of their enemy, but Jesus, on the other hand, stops Satan in his tracks and he possesses all that once Satan owned. All of the title deed to planet earth and even the universe will be taken by Christ and he will even conquer the gate of the enemy, Satan, and claim it all for God and all for God's glory. He will eventually take over Satan's fortress and possess all that Satan now controls and Satan will be thrown into the bottomless pit.

Well, Paul writing to the church at Galatia and the Galatian region said, "You folks don't need to look back to the law. You don't need to go back to the Old Testament economy. You don't need to be fretting yourself about ceremonies and rites and rituals and the moral code as far as gaining a standing before a holy God. Even your father Abraham believed," Genesis 15:6 is where that is recorded, "believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness." And Paul points out, "because the Gospel was preached to Abraham." And my, my, my, wasn't it? Wasn't it?

But let me conclude with how I started: Abraham didn't get this until he was surrendered, until he was broken. God said, "Leave your native land." He didn't really leave it completely because God said leave your people, your relatives, and he took Lot with him. God said later, "Now you're going to have to give up all your companionship with Lot." Then later Abraham figured out a way to help God out and he had a child, Ishmael, through his wife's maidservant, Hagar, and with Hagar he has this child, Ishmael, and he thought, "This is the child of promise," and God said, "Nope. You've got to give up all your plans for Ishmael." Then finally God gave him this precious miracle born son, Isaac, the son of promise. Then God says, "Go sacrifice him." And Abraham goes. Just obeys. Just surrenders.

Is that where God has you? Are you surrendered? Are you broken? Are you at that point where you say, "Christ, I need you and I need your hope. I need your forgiveness. I need you to take over my life." Well, the Bible promises if you'll believe in him, you'll not be disappointed. He will take you in. He will make you a child of God.

Let's bow together in prayer.