*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 15 – August 20

*Walking with Abraham*

**Monday, August 15 Genesis 22:1-2**

*“Here I am”*

Reading chapter 22, you might be overwhelmed at the thought that God would request of you something as difficult as the command to sacrifice Isaac. This is one of the great tests found in Scripture, and it is hard to imagine having anything like it placed at our feet. How would I respond to such a request? Would I have the strength to make such a difficult decision?

While there are times in our lives when we must make difficult decisions in our walk with the Lord, most of our encounters with him will require that we do one very simple thing: acknowledge him. When God calls upon Abraham, the first decision he must make is whether or not he will respond to the Lord. “Here I am,” he says. “Here I am. I hear you, and I am ready to do you will.” What comes next may vary in its difficulty. The Lord may have something very easy for us to do; he may have something very difficult. Regardless of the difficulty of the task, we will never be able to serve him unless we first respond. “Here I am.”

Is the Lord calling your name today? Are you listening for his voice? If so, the next question you must ask yourself is this: *Have I responded?* Have I acknowledged him as a first step toward his will for my life?

*Lord, here I am. Give me the strength to do your will. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 16 Genesis 22:3-8**

*“God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son”*

The Abraham depicted in verses 3-8 is not the same man we encountered back in chapter 12. When faced with uncertainty, Abram sought opportunities to avoid the discomfort and danger that often come with following the commands of God. Abram sought safety and security rather than complete obedience and trust in the Lord. The Abraham of chapter 22 is a man who has placed his complete trust in the Lord and his provision. Having celebrated the great gift of his son Isaac, he now walks beside him with the knowledge that he will have to sacrifice him to the Lord. When Isaac questions the absence of a ram to sacrifice, Abraham’s response marks the total trust he has in God: “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son.”

The complete trust demonstrated by Abraham is the result of a life lived in awareness of the faithfulness of God. For many of us, we live our lives unaware of the Lord’s provision. We either lack understanding or assume that our lives are a result of our own hard work and cunning. The truth is that all good things come from the Lord. He is the source of the good we encounter in our lives.

*Lord, I acknowledge the good that comes from you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 17 Genesis 22:9-14**

*“You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son”*

In many ways, the birth of Isaac is the climax of Abraham’s story. Isaac is evidence that God has been faithful to Abraham and Sarah. In Isaac, the Lord has fulfilled his covenant promise to make a great nation out of Abraham’s descendants. Isaac is a living reminder that Abraham and his descendants are God’s people, and the Lord is their God. For these reasons, Abraham’s willingness to give Isaac to the Lord is all the more surprising. In his willingness to give Isaac to the Lord, Abraham demonstrates his total trust in God.

Are you willing to give to God all that you’ve been holding back? Each of us holds tightly to things that we’re afraid to hand over to God. Yet, by giving to God all that we’ve withheld from him, the Lord is able to do accomplish wonderful things.

*Lord, help me to hand over to you all that I’ve been withholding. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 15 – August 20

*Walking with Abraham*

**Thursday, August 18 Genesis 22:15-24**

*“I swear by my own name that I will certainly bless you”*

Child sacrifice was a common practice in the land that Abraham settled. Those who worshipped other gods believed that the sacrifice of a child was a sure-way of appeasing such gods. For this reason, Abraham is likely not surprised by the order to sacrifice Isaac. However, the command to stay his hand, to keep from sacrificing Isaac would have been a challenge to Abraham’s perception of the character of God. What kind of God rejects child sacrifice? As Abraham learns that the Lord rejects this despicable practice, he simultaneously learns that the Lord has different expectations of him than the world. He holds Abraham and his descendants to a different standard, and his standard will lead them to a different kind of life.

We often have our own perceptions of God challenged and thwarted by his expectations. For example, our world suggests that our enemies ought to be treated accordingly; the Lord’s expectation is that we love them as our neighbor. When we choose to live up to his standard, we learn something about God, and consequently, something about ourselves. The result is a life set apart from the world.

*Lord, let your expectations shape my life. Amen.*

**Friday, August 19 Zechariah 13:9**

*“I will refine them like silver and purify them like gold.”*

We often shy away from the idea that God tests us. For many of us, the word “test” conjures memories of failed report cards and disappointed parents. There are two possible results when tested: pass or failure. To apply these concepts to our relationship with the Lord leaves us wondering if we would be better off avoiding God’s test altogether.

There is, of course, a different perspective. In Zechariah 13:9, we are told that the Lord will refine us like silver and purify us like gold. When God tests us, he is not seeking our destruction; God does not want us to fail! Rather, the Lord is seeking to refine us so that we might be stronger in the face of future hardship or temptation. God’s testing is an act of grace. God is merciful as he strengthens us by his test.

Of course, we’re not always aware of this gift as we wade through the test. I doubt Abraham felt strong in the face of God’s test- the command to sacrifice Isaac. However, like Abraham, our decision to trust in God’s test of our spirit will lead to blessing; we will walk away from the test stronger and grateful for the Lord’s gracious provision.

*Lord, test me that I may grow stronger in you. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 20 John 1:29-31**

*“Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”*

In Genesis 22:8, Abraham says to Isaac, “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering.” For centuries, Christians have reflected on the deep truth of this statement. Indeed, God has provided a sacrifice. In his Son, God has provided *the sacrifice*, the One who stands in our place and reconciles us to our Father. In John 1, John the Baptist acknowledges Jesus Christ as the “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Upon Christ, our sins are nailed to the cross, and we inherit the Kingdom of God as his brothers and sisters.

It is right that we acknowledge the author and agent of our salvation: the Lord. Indeed, God has provided the sheep, an unblemished lamb who stands in our place. What he does on our behalf, we are incapable of accomplishing ourselves. The story of Abraham and Isaac serves as a reminder of God’s faithfulness. The Lamb he provides is our salvation.

*Lord, you have provided the Lamb. He is my salvation. I praise you! Amen.*