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THE

# Teachers' Preparation Leaflet

LESSON 8.

FEBRUARY 25th, 1894.

1st QUARTER.

**Trial of Abraham's Faith.** Gen. 22: 1-13.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." Heb. 11: 17.

**COMMIT TO MEMORY** verses 11-13. **LESSON HYMNS**, 58, 26, 144, 86.

**PROVE THAT**—Faith subdues difficulties. Matt. 21: 21.

**SHORTER CATECHISM**—Quest. 90. How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

## DAILY PORTIONS.

(The Selections of the International Bible Reading Association.)

MONDAY.	TUESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	THURSDAY.	FRIDAY.	SATURDAY.	SAABBATH
Gen. 22: 1-13	Gen. 22: 14-19	Jas. 1: 1-12	1 Pet. 4: 12-19	Jas. 2: 17-23	Phil. 3: 7-14	Heb. 11: 13-19

## PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

If you can get the books, read the chapters on Abraham's Trial in Newman Smythe's *Old Faiths in a New Light*, and Canon Mozely's *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*, and chapter XII in the senior text-book, Deane's *Abraham, His Life and Times*.

There can be no question of the right of the Creator to make this demand upon Abraham. The life of Isaac belonged to God and he alone could dictate the means by which his career upon earth was terminated. We have no right to say that it was a cruel command in view of the happy termination of the trial. It is always good to inflict temporary pain for a sufficiently desirable end. The question is one of degree only, and the result amply justifies all that was suffered in the present case. If there was no doubt that God gave the command, it became a most solemn duty to obey.

Abraham was satisfied that God spoke to him, and if God spoke to any of us, commanding a similar sacrifice, our duty would be the same. But what evidence would satisfy a Christian jury, of ordinary level-headed men, that a man was divinely instructed to slay his son, so that they would not convict him of murder, or send him to an insane asylum? We can conceive of none. Note the following points in explanation of this.

(1) According to the ideas of Abraham's time and even of classic nations, the parental right extended even to the life of the child. He was a mere chattel. Now, an infant which has drawn but one breath has such a right to his own life that he who takes it is a murderer in the eyes of the law. God would not test men in a way that outraged this conception of the value of the individual life. He does not drag men back to barbarism. (2) Human sacrifices were common among surrounding nations

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and it may have occurred to Abraham that God wished to test whether he was willing to give up as much for him as they for their idols. (3) The eternal principles underlying the act were **self-sacrifice and faith**. These are still tested as really, but by means in accord with views of the age.

Certain critics declare that this was an attempt on the part of Abraham to imitate, in a fanatical fashion, the cruel rites of heathenism. But (1) his whole character is at variance with this view of him as an excitable and cruel devotee; (2) it is not clear that human sacrifices were, at that early day, so common in Canaan as they afterwards became (Gen. 15: 16), (3) his act is praised by God (22: 16), which would not have been the case if it were an imitation of the abominations of Molech worship; (4) the very essence of human sacrifice was the certainty of the total loss of the precious victim, but Abraham throughout believed that Isaac would be restored (Heb. 11: 17-19). His merit lies in holding fast to this in spite of Isaac's expected death. "Doubtless when he lifted the knife to slay his son, the sun was turned to darkness to him, the stars left their places, and earth and heaven vanished from his sight; to the eye of sense all was gone that life had built up, and the promise had come actually to an end for evermore; but to the friend of God all was still as certain as ever, all absolutely sure and fixed; the end, the promise, nay even the son of the promise, even he in the fire of the burnt offering was not gone, because that was near and close at hand which could restore,—the great Power which could reverse everything. A voice within said, all this can be undone, and can pass away like a dream of the night, and the heir was safe in the strong hope of him who accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." (Mozely). (5) How far Abraham understood the plan of salvation, we cannot say, but Christ was the object of his faith (John 8: 56), and therefore he must have known that a victim defiled by sin would only pollute Jehovah's altar. The sinless lamb, as type of the sinless Jesus, could alone represent the sinner.

## NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

**INTRODUCTORY.**—More than twenty-five years had passed since our last lesson, during which Abraham's life had been, on the whole, peaceful and prosperous. He was recognized as a "mighty prince" by the peoples amongst whom he dwelt. Abimelech was his sworn friend, and Beersheba was his favorite residence. He seems also to have had a home at Hebron amongst the Hittites, by whom he was regarded with much respect. It was in the midst of this happiness that the message came with which our lesson opens.

**LESSON PLAN.** I. Faith Proved. vs. 1, 2. II. Faith Triumphant. vs. 3-10. III. Faith Rewarded. vs. 11-13.

**I. FAITH PROVED.** 1. **God did prove Abraham (R. V)**—God does not try to make any man commit sin. (Jas. 1: 12-14). Abraham's faith was tested, or tried (Heb. 11: 17). God wished to bring out in full display, for the edification of his people in all ages, and for his own "praise and honor and glory" (1 Pet. 1: 7), the boundless trust which his "friend" placed in him. It was never God's intention that Isaac should be slain (1 Cor. 10: 13). Compare the trial of Job, and also Dent. 8: 2; 2 Chr. 32: 31. **Said unto him**—in some manner which admitted of no doubt that it was God who spoke. 2. Every word was a fresh stab "Thy son," "thine only," "whom thou lovest," "Isaac." The form in the original implies that he wished him to do this freely, now is a word of entreaty, not of time. It is often translated "I pray thee." He must realize fully what is required and decide without constraint. Isaac was the only son of his legitimate wife, and the only one left after the dismissal of Ishmael. Note the points in which Isaac is a type of Christ (John 3: 16). The land of Moriah—The name means "where God appeared," or "which God pointed out" (2 Chr. 3: 1). It was either a well known place of worship, or was named from the circumstances here narrated. Over this district Melchizedek ruled. The Samaritan Pentateuch reads "land of Moreh," but it would have been impossible for Abraham to have travelled from Beersheba to Sichem in a little more than two days (verse 4). **Offer him there**—See the *Preliminary Dissertation*. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Ps. 51: 17).

He never demanded the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul (Micah 6: 7). A human victim, being defiled by sin, would only pollute his altar. Whether Abraham understood this fully or not, he knew that God could not give a command which it was not his duty to obey; the Judge of all the earth would do right. He believed Isaac would be restored to him (Rom. 4: 16; Heb. 11: 17-19). Upon one of the mountains—Tradition states, what is probably correct, that it was on the spot where the temple afterwards stood (2 Chr. 3: 1). Others suggest that it was on Calvary, but it could hardly be called a mountain.

**II. FAITH TRIUMPHANT. 3. Saddled—girded or loaded.** The ass was to carry the wood and other necessities of their journey. He proceeded promptly and with heroic deliberation and minutest forethought. He must have rehearsed the whole scene in imagination. Abraham reached the standard laid down by Christ, Matt. 10: 37. Such sacrifices are never unrewarded, Mark 10: 28, 30. **4. On the third day—15 miles the first day, 20 the second, and 10 the third** would have brought them to mount Moriah. **Lifted up his eyes—**An expression used when something suddenly arrests the attention of the beholder, Gen. 13: 10. Mount Moriah can be seen about three miles off by a traveller approaching from the south. Calvin suggests that the spot had been shewn to him in a vision and that he now recognized the place. Jewish tradition says that it was indicated by a cloud of glory, or pillar of fire. He was familiar with the country and would easily find any designated locality. **5. Abide ye here—**Abraham does not wish any witnesses. They might disturb the solemnity of the occasion, or misunderstand his actions as giving sanction to human sacrifices. **And come to you again—**This was not spoken to deceive the men nor was it the confused utterance of an agitated mind, but the expression of unflinching faith, Heb. 11: 19. **6. Laid it upon Isaac—**See John 19: 17. Isaac must have been quite strong enough to have prevented his father from binding him. Evidently his faith was not unworthy the son of "the father of the faithful." Do not assume that your scholars understand why the fire was carried so far. Even such a simple fact as that "matches" were unknown to Abraham may be new to some of them. They were invented in 1829. **7, 8.** These verses would only be marred by comments. Imagine the silence unbroken save by their foot-falls on the gravelly soil, and the heavy breathing of Isaac under his burden; the aching and perplexed heart of the father and the filial confidence of the son. Note the pathetic refrain "so they went both of them together." Abraham's answer to Isaac's question is no evasion, under it lies the confidence that "in some way or other the Lord will provide." **9.** There is not the least hint of resistance on the part of Isaac. According to Josephus he was 27 years of age. He was born in B C 1896. Again he reminds us of One who was "led as a lamb to the slaughter." See also John 10: 17, 18. **10.** Abraham does not flinch; the sacrifice was virtually offered (Heb. 11: 17; Jas. 2: 21). Do not picture the scene to the scholars in such a way as to obscure the fatherly love of Abraham. Emphasize the confidence that he had from the first that, even if Isaac must be slain and his beloved form consumed to ashes, yet the promise "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," (21: 12) could not be revoked. Isaac would be given back to him.

**III. FAITH REWARDED. 11. The angel of the LORD—**When we read of God appearing after the fall in some visible or outward symbol of his presence, we are ordinarily, if not universally, to understand it of the Son" (Edwards). **Lay not thine hand—**Here we have the evidence of a voice from heaven that God does not accept of human victims! Man is a doomed culprit for whom the victim has to be provided. Only an innocent creature, without moral or physical blemish, can represent him. **Now I know—**A judge may have private knowledge of the truth in a case before him, but he cannot act upon that until it has been brought out in evidence. He then bases his conduct upon it, and approves or condemns accordingly. This trial was not for Abraham's sake only, but for ours, that we might know, what the "Searcher of hearts" did not need experiment to discover, and might learn how to attain a similar altitude of self-surrender and faith. **13. God did provide the lamb.** "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

## SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

When the new Cantilever bridge across the St. John river, in New Brunswick, was built it was made very much stronger than was necessary to resist the greatest strain to which it was likely to be subjected in the course of ordinary traffic. But before the public were allowed to use it a heavy ballast train with four locomotives was run across at full speed. If this loosened no bolt and started no brace, if the bridge stood this severe test, passengers would readily trust themselves upon it. This proof was not

needed to convince the erectors and builders of the strength of their structure, but it was demanded by those who were called upon to put faith in its power to sustain a train of passenger cars. It displayed what the constructors well knew already.

God had appointed Abraham to a very exalted position. He was to be the "father of the faithful," the head and model of all who were to be saved through sharing in his faith. It was necessary to show for all time to come the unbounded confidence which he placed in God's promise to save men through his "Seed," "which is Christ." So he required him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. He made a demand which required amazing self-sacrifice, but it is never referred to in this aspect. It is always regarded as a trial of faith. The self-sacrifice is incidental, but nevertheless most worthy of admiration. His faith could not have been tested in any other way, that is, his unflinching confidence in God's promise to save him, and all who should believe, through Isaac's "Seed." I think we should emphasize this in our teaching. It is so easy to excite sympathy for the harrowing circumstances in which father and son were placed, that we are apt to feel satisfied if the emotions of our scholars are stirred by them. We shall miss the great lesson of this unique trial if we do not leave on their minds a deeper impression of the need of Christ, and the certainty of salvation to all who, being of Abraham's faith, are Abraham's seed.

Review by questions the story of the lesson and show in the first place, that Abraham's faith in Isaac's restoration was shown in his prompt obedience and patient courage. Illustrate these from the lesson. Then point out that Christ is typified by Isaac in a wonderful manner. This cannot be mere accident. One famous writer (Warburton) maintains that God here taught Abraham, in a dramatic way, the whole history of the crucifixion. Then close, as impressively as you can, with an enforcement of the claims of Christ on your scholars. It ought not be hard for us to believe in One whom we know in history and gracious experience, and of whose power to save so many gladly testify. It will "add a barb to the arrow," for the sake of memory, if you write the date Isaac's birth and the current year as below:

### ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

SHOWN IN

RESTED ON

PROMPT COMPLIANCE.  
PATIENT COURAGE.

CHRIST { The Type. B. C. 1896.  
The Saviour A. D. 1894.

## NORMAL DRILL

based on the text-book, "The Sabbath School Teacher's Handbook; or, The Principles and Practice of teaching, with special reference to the Sabbath School," prepared by Principal Kirkland of the Toronto Normal School.

### PRINCIPLES OF MEMORIZING.—(Continued).

**II. Ability to Retain.** This requires all of the foregoing in learning, and besides—

(1) Frequent repetition. Every impression tends to lose its effect after a time, and in order that the second impression may produce an effect, it must occur before the first impression has vanished.

(2) Present the same view of the subject in early repetitions, and vary the view in later repetitions. Ex. - Matt. 6: 25-31; Acts 10: 11-16. Give other examples.

(3) Recall purposely after intervals of several weeks.

**III. Ability to Recall.**—Depends upon—

(1) Frequent practice in recalling what we have learned.

(2) Great accuracy in what we do recall.

(3) Persistency in recalling whatever we attempt to recall.

(4) Great concentration of mind and great will-power in the matter.