

“It Just Doesn’t Make Any Sense!”—Genesis 22:1-3

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “It Just Doesn’t Make Any Sense!”, is Genesis 22:1-3 → *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“It just doesn’t make any sense!” How many times has this statement crossed your mind while trying to understand someone’s way of thinking during a conversation or wondering about peoples’ behavior? From striving to follow simple instructions, to determining the benefits of decisions made by leadership which are supposed to benefit you, making sense of it all proves to be challenging to say the least. There are a lot of times when we experience confusion as we watch the dynamics of life unfold before us.

“It just doesn’t make any sense!” The same thought can occur when

we encounter **God's working** in our lives as well. From reading about His strange and miraculous activities in the lives of His people in the Scriptures, to the everyday providence which He graciously bestows in our lives, faith demands us to simply trust that the LORD knows what He's doing, even if it doesn't seem to make any sense.

In verse 2 of our text God told Abraham to do something that just didn't make any sense. *He said, "Take your son, your **only** son Isaac, whom you love, and . . . offer him . . . as a burnt offering.* What might you have thought if you had been in Abraham's sandals? I might wonder who was really talking to me and doubt it was Yahweh since He forbids sacrificing children in religious rituals of such a nature (cf. 2 Kings 16:2; 17:17; Leviticus 18:21). Not only would this command seem strange in my mind, it would be preposterous!

This command is even more difficult to understand in light of God's promise given to Abraham when He first appeared to him, recorded in Genesis 12:2-3 → *I will make of you a great nation, and . . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* This was Isaac, his **only** son, through whom Yahweh said this promise would be fulfilled (cf. Genesis 17:19-21). How could God fulfill this promise of making Abraham into a great nation if he would kill his *only son*? I can picture Abraham's confusion because it didn't make sense to take away his only visible hope of seeing God's promise fulfilled.

It is also intensified considering everything which took place to bring Abraham to this point. The years of waiting for Isaac because Sarah was unable to have children until she was ninety. “It just doesn’t make any sense!” actually characterized Abraham and Sarah’s whole life in so many of the events through which Yahweh led them. Now . . . killing their son, their *only son Isaac*, whom they loved?

However, God was doing something here which looked far beyond just sacrificing Isaac and testing Abraham’s faith. Notice the LORD stressed that this was Abraham’s *only son* three times. Notice also God reminded Abraham of his love for Isaac—*whom you love*. Through this experience the LORD was giving Abraham a glimpse of the fulfillment of His covenant promises which formed his faith in God’s own beloved Son, Jesus. All peoples on earth would be blessed with the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through that fulfillment in the sacrifice of Abraham’s descendant, Jesus, on the cross. Verse 1 tells us this command was to test Abraham’s faith, the object of which was Jesus.

From the text it appears that Abraham obeyed God in a rather calm, cool and collected manner. However, while on their way in obedience to God’s command, Isaac asked a very logical question: *“My father! . . . Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”* Abraham said, *“God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.”* (cf. Genesis 22:7 3-8) Little did Abraham know how

God would *provide for Himself the lamb* for an offering—over two thousand years later in the person of Jesus, the Lamb of God Who was sacrificed not only for the forgiveness of Abraham and Isaac’s sin, but for our sins as well.

Doesn’t he seem rather calm considering he could possibly kill his own son? Such a command would probably cause most people to experience anxiety, fear, grief and confusion, just to name a few of the emotions which Abraham may also have experienced. Fortunately the Bible interprets itself. Hebrews 11:17-19 says *by faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

Abraham’s obedience in this situation actually expresses how Abraham had grown in his faith relationship with the LORD over those many years. Through the different situations and changes in his life Abraham had learned that the LORD provides in **His** ways, in **His** time, by **His** power. In many ways God had shown him that, even if it doesn’t make sense, He will perform His power and work so that His promises are fulfilled.

This “test” which Abraham underwent has a lot of actions involved

with it that bring to mind many images of God's working faith in our own lives through His Son, Jesus Christ. Let's look at a few of the connections to the Person & Work of Jesus in this "test."

- Genesis 22:9 says *Abraham built an altar . . . bound Isaac his son and laid him . . . on top of the wood*. Jesus, God's only Son Whom He loved, offered Himself as a sacrifice for your sins, bound to the wood of a cross.
- The description of Isaac in verse 2 as *your son, your **only** son . . . whom you love* reminds us of John 3:16 → *For God so loved the world, that He gave His **only** Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **Jesus is God's only Son through Whom the blessings of forgiveness of sins, new life and salvation have come to you through faith in Him.***
- In Genesis 22:15-18 God reaffirmed His promises to Abraham pointing out again that through his *offspring* (i.e. Jesus) *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because he had obeyed His voice*. Jesus accomplished your perfect obedience to His Father's Will to bring about your salvation.
- The ram provided by God and offered *up as a burnt offering instead of his son* points to Jesus, *the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world* (cf. John 1:19). Jesus was the perfect substitutionary

sacrifice and payment for the punishment which you deserve because of your sins.

Such details of this event which bring pictures of Jesus' Person & Work are called typology. God does something in Abraham's life that doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense, except by faith in the promised Savior, Jesus. It all pictured what Yahweh was going to do in the lives of His people in the future through Jesus, the Christ. These actions were types intended to connect people by faith to the atonement of Jesus.

Yet, it's still kind of hard to understand why such a seemingly senseless thing like this had to happen in the first place. I can picture psychologists analyzing the situation, conclude that Isaac could not encounter such an experience without some kind of permanent psychological damage, call social services, who would visit Abraham and Sarah to question them as to why Abraham would do such a thing, and determine their competence or incompetence as parents. What was Sarah's reaction afterward if Isaac would have ran into the house saying, "Mom! Mom! Guess what dad and I did today!"?

The LORD working in seemingly "insensible" ways makes one ask the question of the ages: "Why?" This question also pops up when considering how God worked out His plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Why did He allow

Himself to suffer at the hands of sinners? He could have just gotten rid of the people who were killing Him. After all, He was God and they certainly didn't care about Him.

Many times the cross of Jesus Christ becomes a stumbling block to people because it just doesn't seem to make any sense. It's a stumbling block to those who do not want to face their sins and eternal damnation. When confronted with the cross of Christ, it's senselessness and your sinfulness come into clear focus. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says *the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*. It is foolishness not only because it doesn't make any sense without faith but also because it's curse and judgment upon your sin is not a comfortable feeling. Through it the Holy Spirit produces guilt in the conviction of sin. Ironically, it also provides the **only** way for that guilt to be appeased and for you to find comfort in the presence of God. Faith in Christ's crucifixion takes that which does not make sense and gives it new meaning in the comfort of your forgiveness of sins!

So, what really doesn't make any sense is . . . for you to get what you don't deserve and not get what you do deserve. Make sense? Absolutely not. But it's true for you by faith in Christ given by the Holy Spirit. Even though we should get what we deserve (i.e. eternal punishment in hell), we get what we don't deserve instead (i.e. eternal life in heaven). God's grace—His undeserved favor—doesn't make any sense but you still

receive it's benefits eternally!

Most of God's dealings with you are not going to make any sense. You can constantly respond to His acting in your life by shaking your head and wondering "what in the world is going on here." Immediately you cling by faith to Christ's Person & Work where the fact that His way of thinking not being your way of thinking is wonderful. Faith always clings to God's work, not yours. Faith clings to God's power, not yours. Faith submits itself to God's way of thinking, not your rationalizations and analyzations. Realizing it's "OK" if it doesn't seem to make any sense to you keeps you humble so that at all times, by faith in Jesus, you will see His power at work in your life and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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