

Abraham is known to us all as the "Father of the Faithful", in large part because of his act of obedience in offering up his only son Isaac. We know that obedience to God, even though it costs us greatly, is the example that we should all follow. This means that we have to struggle to obey God when we really don't want to. We should be growing more and more like Him, but in our weakness we find ourselves with very hard choices to make.

What if we don't want to do something that God tells us to do, even though it is Good and Right? This case reminds me of the prophet Jonah, who did not want the people of Ninevah, to whom God told him to preach, to be saved.

*But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*  
Jonah 4:1-3

Of course, we know how displeased God was with Jonah. Jonah should have believed in the Goodness of God for all mankind, instead of being so nationalistic.

What if God asks us to do something that is not so much Right or Wrong, as it is distasteful? When Ezekiel was told by God to illustrate His message to His people in a special way, we find:  
*Eat the food as you would a barley cake; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel." The LORD said, "In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them." Then I said, "Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself. From my youth until now I have never eaten anything found dead or torn by wild animals. No unclean meat has ever entered my mouth." "Very well," he said, "I will let you bake your bread over cow manure instead of human excrement."* Ezekiel 4:12

Here Ezekiel was asked to do something very distasteful to him; it was against God's law, but it was obviously not in the same category of supreme Goodness as loving your neighbor. But Ezekiel's understanding of the law made God's request a terrible thing to him and he asked for relief. It is interesting that God asked him to do something against the law.

Well, what if God asks us to do something that we feel is totally against moral Goodness? Think about the order that God gave Abraham in Genesis 22:2:

*Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."*

God asked Abraham to commit murder on a totally innocent victim. Now we know that God never intended for this command to be fulfilled, but think about what went through Abraham's mind as he considered this. Can you imagine? This was not like giving up chocolate to lose weight; this was Abraham's much beloved and sought for son. Compared to this, the handling of dung was a very minor matter. Consider Abraham's confusion as he strives to be like God, but is told to do something totally incompatible with His Goodness.

Here we see another level of the struggle that Abraham had in his obedience to God, and why he indeed deserves the name "Father of the Faithful." Abraham was asked to give up something he loved very much, but he also showed his faith in that he was willing to do something totally against his conscience: murder. Can you imagine the headlines if he had accomplished this today?

#### **Father Kills Son during Mountain Worship Service!**

We would liken Abraham to the Son of Sam killer.

There is a great parallel in the story of Abraham to that of God watching His son die for us. But with God there was no one above Him to stay His hand. Christ Himself had to do what was more than just distasteful: He bore our sins in all of their filth to the cross so that we would not be burdened with it anymore. We can see the magnitude of His overpowering love for us, as it overpowered His distaste and horror at having to come into direct contact with our sin.

Abraham was able to get through the struggle of dealing with what God had asked him to do. His faith allowed him to get through it. We must strive for a similar faith so that we can conquer the confusion that we have in our own lives in dealing with what God asks us to do and to be.

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