

18. Fallen man's human efforts can never measure up to the expectations of a perfect God. Only the perfection of a Human whose works are achieved from the status quo of perfection could accomplish that which Jesus was qualified to do.
19. Since Jesus was judged for our sins, He canceled our debt by doing so, therefore it is the work of Christ that provides salvation, not our works. Anything added to faith in Him violates the requirements of the integrity of God. The antithesis of this is addressed next by Paul in verse 5:

**Romans 4:5** **But** [ **δέ** (*dé*): the antithesis of v. 4 is grace ] **to him who does not work** [ **negative conjunction μή** (*mḗ*): “does not,” plus the present active participle ἐργάζομαι (*ergázomai*): “to exert energy” ], **but** [ (*dé*): conjunction of contrast ] **instantaneously believes** [ **aoristic present active participle of πιστεύω** (*pisteúō*): “faith alone” ] **in Him who perpetually justifies** [ **static present active participle of δικαιόω** (*dikaióō*) ] **the ungodly** [ **ἀσεβής** (*asebḗs*): unrighteous ], **his faith** [ **πίστις** (*pístis*): absence of works ] **is credited** [ **present passive indicative of λογίζομαι** (*logízomai*): “credited to his account” ] **for righteousness** [ **δικαιοσύνη** (*dikaíosúnē*): “the imputation of divine +R” ]. (EXT)

20. Faith alone in Christ alone is a non-meritorious decision. It is absent any work. It is simply the use of one's law of freedom to positively respond to the gospel message that Jesus Christ, the divinely provided Individual who was judged for the sins of the human race. Since all human sin has been judged, faith in the working object of Jesus results in eternal salvation.
21. This decision retains the new believer in the Book of Life by means of the imputation of divine righteousness. This results in Top-Circle assets we share with Christ: (1) righteousness: Romans 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21), (2) eternal life: (1 John 5:11–12), (3) sonship: (John 1:12 [children]; Galatians 3:26), (4) heirship: Romans 8:16–17; 1 Peter 1:4 [inheritance]), (5) royalty: Colossians 1:13 [kingdom]; 2 Timothy 2:11–12 [reign], (6) priesthood: 1 Peter 2:5, 9, (7) Election: Ephesians 1:4 [chose], (8) destiny: Ephesians 1:5 [predestined], and (9) sanctification: 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; Ephesians 1:4 [holy]. (Note: Brackets contain translations in the NASB.)



22. Therefore, in the life of Abraham, the Bible presents two cases of him using his Law of Freedom to accomplish certain objectives. The first we noted had him using his Law of Freedom to be justified by works by referencing the five-paragraph Abrahamic Covenant as the working object of his faith.
23. This occurred in Genesis 22 where he went through the process of carrying out the divine mandate to take Isaac from Beersheba to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on an altar.
24. This event was analyzed by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:17–19. In that text, the writer makes it clear that Abraham as a believer executed the details of the divine commandment by applying 45 years of spiritual growth to accomplish the objective.
25. The second event had to do with Abraham's salvation which is recorded in Genesis 15:6 where he made an instantaneous decision to place his personal faith in 'Adonai, Jesus Christ, for salvation.
26. In this incident, Abraham's working object of his faith was the Lord, his positive volition resulted in a faith response to the gospel. This event is recorded in Romans 4:1–5.
27. Paul addresses Abraham's salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ in light of the Abrahamic Covenant:

**Galatians 3:14** That in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham [ **salvation by grace through faith** ] might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

**NOTE:** Paul now uses a debater's technique, saying something that is not true to lead to an obvious truth:

**Galatians 3:15** Fellow believers, I keep on speaking from human viewpoint, but though a human contract, yet ratified in the past it stands ratified, which no man can void or amend.

**NOTE:** Paul is using as an illustration a legal principle of the first century. His point is, if unbelievers cannot alter a contract without legal permission, then it follows that God will not alter one of His contracts, e.g., the Abrahamic Covenant.

In context, Paul is arguing against the Judaizers in Galatia who taught that salvation required submission to the Mosaic Law.



28. His point is that the Mosaic Law was instituted for man to observe and comply, but human volition had repeatedly disobeyed its requirements. An unconditional covenant is instituted by God which He insures is inviolate and therefore unalterable and eternal.
29. Verse 16 follows, but is part of a parenthesis used to amplify the Abrahamic Covenant:

**Galatians 3:16** (Now to Abraham and His Seed [ σπέρμα (*spérma*) ] were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” referring to earthly descendants of Abraham, but rather to one, “And to your singular seed, that is Christ.)

30. Abraham’s seed is singular. It only refers to believers. Abram’s “seed” is Christ and those who have placed their faith in Him are in union with Him.
31. Abraham’s seeds, plural, refer to the Jewish race. Every Jew is genetically related to Abraham, but only those who are spiritually united with the Seed have access to the promises.

**Galatians 3:17** What I am saying is the Law, which occurred four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the Abrahamic Covenant which was previously ratified by God and cancel what has been promised.

32. A covenant, issued by God, cannot be amended. It may be explained, but its original content is sacrosanct. The Mosaic Law was designed to teach through rituals and sacrifices the typology that explains the Messiah.
33. The Abrahamic Covenant which is directed toward the “Seed,” is the gospel for believers in the Old Testament as they look forward to the arrival, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection of the prophesied Lamb of God.
34. Church Age believers look back retrospectively to the Person and Work of Christ while anxiously anticipating the Rapture. Believers in the future Tribulation also look back historically to Christ, while impatiently looking forward to the Second Advent.

**Galatians 3:18** [ Return to a debater’s technique ] For if the inheritance [ κληρονομία (*klēronomía*): promises to heirs ] is based on the Law, then it is not based on the promise; but God gave [ χαρίζομαι (*charízomai*): no strings attached ] it to Abraham by means of the promise [ the Abrahamic Covenant ]. (EXT)



## Analysis of Genesis 22:1–18

1. James, in James 2:21, references Abraham as an example of a person who was a “hearer of the Word” for a long time before he got around to being a “doer of the Word.”
2. The question James uses to amplify Abraham’s “doing” is, “Was he not justified by works when he offered Isaac?”
3. We have gone through the forty-five-year sequence of events during which Abraham, as a believer in Messiah, received five paragraphs from God which are summarized under the phrase, “The Abrahamic Covenant.”
4. “Justified by works” is the summation of that process culminating with the event on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. In 18 verses we are able to see the “doing” of Abraham following a long period of “hearing.”
5. Abraham “heard” the Lord’s repeated revelations of a divine covenant to him personally. They became the working object of his faith when he executed the “doing” of his previous occasions of “hearing.”
6. The spiritual-growth advancements of Abraham and Isaac had grown to the point where both were now being tested. When Genesis 22 takes place, Abraham was 120 years old and Isaac was 20.

**Genesis 22:1**      Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

1. The word “tested” is the Piel intensive perfect, active verb, נִסָּהּ (*nasah*), designed to determine if Abraham can make the advance from being a “hearer” of the Word to being a “doer” of the Word.
2. The intensive perfect places the emphasis on being tested for the purpose of approval. Abraham has received consistent information from God that the patriarch will be the father of a great nation including several additional paragraphs.
3. The issues Abraham must resolve are these: “Do you believe God? Do you believe the veracity of His Word? Do you believe He has the integrity to keep His Word? Do you believe He has the omnipotence to back up His Word? Do you believe God will do what He says regardless of my personal circumstances?”
4. These are the questions that every believer must answer in the affirmative if he is going to become a “doer of the Word” rather than a “hearer only.”
5. To begin the process, the Lord exclaims, “Abraham!” Abraham simply responds, “Here I am.”



**Genesis 22:2** 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.”

1. The opening comment is, “Take now your son”; the verb is the Qal active imperative of **לָקַח** (*laqach*): “to grasp or seize” is one way to translate it, but in this command to Abraham, he is to use his parental authority, to “take your son.”
2. The time for growing in grace has advanced to the point where Abraham must respond immediately to the commandment, “take your son!” This is the first of four ways God chooses to identify Isaac. The second comes next, “your only son,” **יָחִיד** (*yachiyth*).
3. The third term identifying his son is, “whom you love,” the verb, **אָהַב** (*'ahav*) and refers to love for another person, here paternal love for his son. The fourth identifies who that other person is, the proper noun, **יִצְחָק** (*Yischaq*): “Isaac.” This culls out Ishmael.
4. These four identifying terms insure that Abraham cannot possibly conclude that the Lord is talking about Ishmael. It is crystal that the one being spoken of is Isaac who is to be taken to the “land of Moriah.”
5. Abraham is to take Isaac on a journey, indicated by the Qal imperative of the verb **הָלַךְ** (*halach*): “to go.” This is a command to leave Beersheba promptly once necessary preparations are made.
6. The destination is the Hebrew noun, **מֹרְיָה** (*Moriyyah*). It is a compound of the verb, **רָאָה** (*ra'ah*): “to see,” and the noun, **יְהוָה** (*Yehowah*), translated, Jehovah, *YHWH*, or *'Athonai*. Together they form the proper noun, *Moriyyah*: “Jehovah sees,” or better, “Jehovah provides.”
7. What Abraham is to do when he gets there comes next with the phrase, “and offer him there.” The word “offer” is the Hiph'il imperative of **עָלָה** (*'alah*): “the motion associated with lifting up an offering onto an altar.” Here it is the causative active voice.
8. Abraham is caused to lift up a sacrifice onto an altar on Mount Moriah. The identity of the offering is the pronoun “him” which reflects back on the proper noun, “Isaac.”
9. Not leaving well-enough alone, the Lord continues by instructing Abraham to then complete the process by setting him on fire, consequently, Isaac is to be sacrificed as a “burnt offering.”



10. This passage has nothing to do with the Levitical offerings among which some animals were to be burned. This event on Mount Moriah occurred long before the Levitical Priesthood and the sacrificial calendar were established in Leviticus.
11. This is not only independent of them, but unique to this occasion. Here is a brief synopsis of the sacrifice that was commanded to Abraham:

Abraham lived at a time when sacrifices and religion were virtually identical. On his arrival at Shechem he erected an altar (Genesis 12:7). At Bethel also (v. 8), and on his return from Egypt he worshipped there (Genesis 13:4). Such sacrifices expressed adoration and prayer. They constituted worship. At Hebron he built an altar (v. 8), officiating always as his own priest. In Genesis 15:4ff he offers a “covenant” sacrifice, when the animals were slain, divided, the parts set opposite each other, and prepared for the other party to the covenant. In chapter 22 Abraham attempts to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering, as was probably the custom of his neighbors. That he attempted it shows that the practice was not shocking to his ethical nature. It tested the strength of his devotion to God, shows the right spirit in sacrifices, and teaches for all time that God does not desire human sacrifice—a beast will do. What God does want is the obedient heart.<sup>1</sup>

12. Where this burnt offering is to take place will be revealed later.

**Genesis 22:2** With your son, your only legitimately born son, whom you have always loved, namely, Isaac, and promptly go to the land of Moriah where Jehovah will provide, and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will indicate to you. (EXT)

**Genesis 22:3** So Abraham rose up 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 God had told him. (NASB)

1. Abraham did not dillydally around. He “rose early”: the Hiph‘il causative, imperfect of the verb שָׁכַם (*shakam*): “To be caused to rise up early to pack and go on a journey.”
2. Why was Abraham so motivated to respond to the commandment to move out as soon as possible? Because he knew that Jehovah would provide!

<sup>1</sup> J. J. Reeve, “Sacrifice: In the Old Testament,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 4:2641–42.



3. This verb indicates that Abraham is no longer in the status of “hearing” the Word of God taught for intellectual retention. He has now shifted over to the status of “doing” the Word of God. The working objects of his faith for application were the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant.
4. **Point of Doctrine:** The New Testament contains passages that use the saga of Abraham to drive home the point that hearing is step one in *learning* the Christian way of life. Applying what you know to life and circumstances is step two in the *execution* of the Christian way of life.  
**NOTE:** Romans 4:1–5; Hebrews 11:17–19; Galatians 3:14–18; and James 1:22–25; 2:21–26 discuss the Abrahamic Covenant.
5. After getting up, Abraham’s first chore was to “saddle his donkey.” The verb “to saddle” is the Qal imperfect of **חָבַשׁ (*chavash*)**: its primary definition is, “to wind or wrap one object with another. It is frequently used of saddling a donkey.”
6. Abraham then “took two of his young men with him.” The verb “took” is the Qal imperfect of the verb, **לָקַח (*laqach*)**: “the act of taking things standing at one’s disposal.”<sup>2</sup> Abraham took two servants along with him.
7. This is not a superfluous detail. First, there are common sense reasons to take these men along. The more people in the party the better prepared they would be to deal with robbers along the 40-mile trip.
8. But there is an important doctrinal reason for doing so as well. Just before leaving these two witnesses behind at Mount Moriah, Abraham made this statement to them, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you” (Genesis 22:5).
9. Next Abraham “took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together” (v. 6).
10. It is evident that Abraham is prepared to offer a sacrifice but without the requisite animal for doing so. The only individual available for an offering is Isaac.
11. When Abraham and Isaac returned to the “young men,” Isaac was unharmed which the two men, as witnesses, were able to confirm. This fulfills a legal requirement of the yet to be implemented Mosaic Law in:

**Deuteronomy 19:15b** “... on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”

<sup>2</sup> H. Seabass, “חָבַשׁ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 8:18.



12. The Mosaic Law had not yet been instituted, but the policy Moses states in Deuteronomy is a legal standard contained in both Testaments and adopted into British and American jurisprudence:

**Amendment VI: In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.<sup>3</sup>**

13. Jurisprudence in the fallen environment of the devil’s world is divinely structured so that the one charged for a crime must be considered innocent until proved guilty. His guilt or innocence must be based on evidence of two or more witnesses. These “two young men” fulfilled the divine requirement to certify the events on Mount Moriah.
14. Accompanying these two men was Isaac, Abraham’s son, the only member of the troop that could possibly be the object of the sacrifice.
15. To prepare for a burnt offering, Abraham is said to have split wood to carry on the journey and use it for a burnt offering on Moriah. The word “split” is the verb **בָּקַע (baqa’)**: “To split with force.” Striking wood against the grain is chopping; doing so with the grain is splitting. The latter produces smaller pieces that are easier to ignite and are more flammable.
16. Abraham has been instructed to use the wood to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering on an altar.
17. Splitting done, Abraham “arose,” the Qal imperfect of **קָם (qum)**. This verb is different from *shakam* which means to get out of bed. *Qum* means to “stand up,” but in this case it means Abraham mounted up and headed out toward the land of Moriah.
18. Notice the efficiency of Abraham’s preparation. He is not morose. He does not pray to the Lord to change His mind about sacrificing Isaac. He does not sleep in late hoping the Lord was not really serious about this. He got up out of bed, saddled up his donkey, split up the wood, and “went up the road to the place God had told him.
19. Question: Why was Abraham so unwaveringly committed to carrying out this mission without question, without delay, and without sorrow?

<sup>3</sup> *Forty Proclamations: The Theology of Grace Doctrine Church* (St. Charles, Mo.: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 2011), 78.



20. Below, in blue, are excerpts from an esteemed theologian who paints a verbal picture of what he characterizes as, “Abraham’s struggle.” I intersperse within it, bracketed commentary in black:

Several features of the narrative serve to keep the reader’s attention focused directly on the inward struggle of Abraham as he carried out the Lord’s request—all, we might add, without any mention of the actual thoughts of Abraham’s mind.

[There is nothing in the narrative that mentions anything about Abraham experiencing an “inward struggle.” It is true there is no mention of Abraham’s actual thoughts, but those thoughts were formed over the course of 45 years during which the working object of his faith was the Abrahamic Covenant.]

First, there is the abruptness of the Lord’s request within the narrative.

[Abruptness is usually the issue when a believer is being tested. More often than not, there is no head’s-up and for a reason. It is designed to determine whether or not the doctrine learned is on the launching pad of the stream of consciousness.]

Apart from the remark in verse 1 that the narrative represented a test of Abraham, the reader is given no advanced warning of the nature of the request nor of its severity. Nothing in the preceding narratives would have hinted at this sort of request.

[This is the third time the writer refers to the phrase in verse 2, “offer him as a burnt offering,” as a “request.” There was no request given. The word “offer” is the Hiph’il imperative of הִלָּחַץ (*alah*): “the motion associated with lifting up an offering onto an altar.” This was a command!]

The reader is as surprised and shocked by the Lord’s request [#4] as Abraham himself would have been.

[There is not one single jot or tittle indicating Abraham ever responded with “surprise” or “shock.”]

The whole of the request [#5] is made up of three simple imperatives (v. 2); “Take,” “go,” and “sacrifice him.” Like many biblical narratives, the reader often knows information that the characters in the narrative do not. In this case the reader knows that this was a test. But apart from this, we know no more about God’s plans and ways than the characters within the narrative itself.

At the same time, in the absence of any explanation from the narrator, we are forced to read our own thoughts and feelings into those of Abraham.



What is particularly noticeable is how the writer of this story prolongs the narrative with excessive and deliberate details of Abraham's preparation for the journey and the journey itself. By allowing or, indeed, forcing the reader to follow one incidental and perfunctory act after the other (e.g., "[he] saddled his donkey" [v. 3a], "he took with him two of his servants" [v.3b], "he had cut enough wood" [v3c]—none of these acts prove relevant to the narrative in the end), the writer forces the reader to look beyond these narratively meaningless external events to ponder the thoughts of Abraham himself as he so matter-of-factly carried them out.

[Several times the author of the article refers to the "narrator" or the "writer" in critical terms such as "excessive and deliberate details," "incidental and perfunctory act after the other," and "meaningless external events." What was in Abraham's mind was not the commanded sacrifice, but his faith in the Abrahamic Covenant, paragraph 5: "I will establish my covenant with Isaac and his descendants after him (Genesis 17:19b)."

The "narrator" or "writer" is God the Holy Spirit, Who, through enduement, revealed to Moses the "narrative," who then through inspiration wrote it down verbatim into the twenty-second chapter of Genesis.]

Few narratives in Genesis can equal this story in dramatic tension. The writer seems deliberately to prolong the tension of both Abraham and the reader in his depiction of the last moments before God interrupted the action and called the test to a halt. Abraham's every action is described in exaggerated detail. At the last dramatic moment—"[Abraham] reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son" (v. 10)—the Lord intervened and, as Abraham had already anticipated, provided a fit substitute for the burnt offering. Abraham therefore named the altar he had built, "The Lord will provide" (v. 14).<sup>4</sup>

21. This analysis is offered to emphasize the point that when evaluating a narrative passage in Scripture, its content reflects a true and accurate description of the event. The theologian must treat every component of it as essential to a full understanding.
22. In this case, full understanding must reflect back on all the events in Abraham's life from Genesis 12:1 to Genesis 22:1, a 50-year period during which Abraham developed and facilitated a doctrinal inventory into the working object of his faith in Genesis 22.

**(End JAS2-40. See JAS2-41 for continuation of study at p. 401.)**

<sup>4</sup> John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 1990), 2:168–69.

