

• *Written to persuade us to keep believing in God and His promises*

• *To Christians who would like to carry on being Christians*

• *No drawing back*

• *A clean conscience and access to God*

• *Endurance to receive the promise of usefulness and reward*

• *Illustrated by the story in Genesis 22*

1. It began with a test

2. It involved a threat to the promises that God had given to Abraham

3. The challenge to Abraham's faith led him to greater faith than ever

Now our writer returns to Abraham. We must keep in mind what he is doing. He is wanting to persuade us to keep believing in God and his promises. He is not writing to people who are not Christians, and he is not writing to Christians who have forsaken 'the times we gather together to meet each other'. He is only writing to Christians who would like to carry on being Christians and make some progress as Christian people. His great request and his warning is that we should not draw back, in unbelief and rebellious doubt, from God and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God has provided the possibility of a cleansed conscience and access to himself. 'We **can** boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place...' – he said. There is the possibility of finding mercy and grace from God himself. God himself says, 'Draw near to me' (Isaiah 48:16). Our writer pleads with us not to sin deliberately after we have received the knowledge of the truth. More positively, what he wants from us is that we should find the will of God for our lives and press on in doing the will of God in the hope of great reward. We have need of endurance that we might receive the promise of usefulness and reward. God will soon come to our rescue, but we need to persist in faith.

So our writer is now showing us what this means by pointing us to the great examples of faith in the Old Testament. He has mentioned Abel and Enoch and Noah, but the greatest model of faith is Abraham. Now he tells us how Abraham's faith brought him to the greatest achievement of his life. He has in mind the story we find in Genesis 22.

1. It began with a test. ¹⁷*By faith Abraham, at a time when he was tested, offered up Isaac in sacrifice.* Before Abraham reached the greatest blessing of his life he faces the greatest test of his life. It is likely to happen that way to us also.

2. It involved a threat to the promises that God had given to Abraham. ¹⁷*By faith Abraham, at a time when he was tested offered up Isaac in sacrifice.* Abraham who had received the promises offered up his one and only son. The demand of God involved Isaac and yet Isaac was the one in whom all the promises of God were concentrated. ¹⁸*Of Isaac it was said, 'In Isaac a seed will be called into being for you.'* If Isaac died, what would happen to everything that God had been promising to Abraham for many years? Sometimes a challenge comes to us, something that threatens everything we have been living for, something that even threatens what we believe to be the will of God for our lives.

3. The challenge to Abraham's faith led him to greater faith than ever. Our writer says: ¹⁹*He reckoned that God was able even to raise Isaac from the dead. And – in a parable – he did receive him back from the dead.* Our text does not say Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac (despite some modern translations); it says, 'Abraham...offered up his one and only son'. He did it! In spirit and intention it was as good as done! What enabled him to be so obedient was that Abraham had been raised to new heights of faith. As he was bringing the knife down upon

• Isaac – believing for a resurrection

• Christian faith begins by being creation-faith and it rises to become resurrection faith

• Abraham reckoned – on the basis of what God had promised

his son he was reckoning within himself that God could raise Isaac from the dead if necessary! We remember how he said to the servants, 'We will come back to you'¹. In Abraham's mind Isaac was as good as dead. Then God gave him Isaac back again! It was like believing for a resurrection and it was – symbolically – a resurrection of Isaac that Abraham received. Abraham's faith became resurrection-faith. Christian faith begins by being creation-faith² and it rises to become resurrection-faith.

Abraham reckoned! It was spiritual logic that enabled Abraham to rise to great heights of faith. Abraham said to himself, 'God has given me these promises concerning a seed through whom all nations will be blessed. Now God is asking me to sacrifice that very seed. But God has all power. And God's promise never fails. It can only mean that God plans to raise my son Isaac from the dead. I know he conquers death because I remember Enoch. So I reckon he will do something similar for me!' It was this kind of spiritual argumentative logic that led Abraham to confidently trust in God as one who raises the dead.

4. The greatest part of the story is taken for granted!

• The promise secured

• He wants Christians to travel along the same pathway of faith that Abraham travels

4. **The greatest part of the story is taken for granted!** Our writer knows that we know what happened, and Hebrews 6:13–20 has already referred to the oath that Abraham received at this time. Abraham's persistent faith eventually led him to the point where he 'obtained' the promise. God swore that Abraham would actually have fulfilled the promises he has been believing for many years. They were really made secure after the event of Genesis 22. Persistence in faith will lead to the inheriting of the promises. This is the point that our writer has been making all along and now he again illustrates his point from the story of Abraham. He wants Christians to travel along the same pathway of faith that Abraham travels. The modern Christian has more than Abraham had! He has the ever-powerful blood of Christ to enable him to draw strength from the throne of grace. He has the all-powerful intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

¹ Genesis 22:5

² see 11:3



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk
 Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk