**ABRAHAM (#5)**

***The Rest Of The Story***

My favorite media personality of all time was not some big-name anchorman on TV. It was not some hotshot author or actor. The one person I would stop everything to listen to was Paul Harvey. I loved to listen to his one-of-a-kind “*Paul Harvey’s News And Comments*” on ABC radio every Monday through Friday. Then, my most anticipated moment came daily at 3:00 to 3:05 when he began his unique four-minute segment called “*The Rest Of The Story*” in which he held us spell-bound, anxious to discover the mystery person or event he was talking about. For 33 years (May 1976 to February 2009) I set my watch to hear his twist on an historical figure or event. Although it has been over 11 years since his death I still think about him at noon and 3:00 pm, wishing I could hear his voice one more time.

Paul Harvey was an American original, an icon, a voice of common sense. He was to radio what Norman Rockwell was to art. He was a great patriot who used his influence and talent to speak of American values, and godly virtues. His kind is sadly absent in this day of vile journalism. But I feel certain if he was still among us he would love to weave together another fascinating tale that begins something like this…

Once upon a time long ago and far away … *God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am*.’ (Gen. 22:1)

*But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”
So he said, “Here I am*.” (Gen. 22:11)

Between those two quotes is found the second most breathtaking story in all the Bible. Everything about Abraham to this point has only been a preface to this historical moment. In fact, it has only been replicated one other time, which ended much differently. More on that in a moment.

In Genesis 22 we discover God called this aged father to take his beloved son to a far-off mountain, execute him, then burn him. This test by God has been questioned by theologians and ridiculed by skeptics for centuries. How could a loving Father ask another loving father to sacrifice his precious child as if he was a common animal? Only by reading “the rest of the story” can we find the answer to this enigma.

At the ripe old age of 100, with his wife far past child-bearing age at 90, they miraculously have a son that had been promised for 25 years. Yes, at age 86 Ishmael had been born to Sarah’s handmaid Hagar, but he was not the son of promise. Isaac was given to them as the “*seed*” that would one day bring a blessing to all the world (Gen. 12:3). It was to be in Isaac that Abraham would have a lineage like the stars of heaven and sand of the sea (Gen. 15:5). Abraham believed God, unconditionally. To prove it, God “*tested*” him with a trial far greater than even Job’s. Read and think if this was asked of you (Gen. 22:1-5):

​*1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”
2 Then He said, “Take now 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.”
3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”*

Did you hear God? Listen again. Take now:
1) Your son, your only son (that is, your only “son of promise”)
2) Your son Isaac (clarifying He did not mean Ishmael)
3) Whom you love (assuring him that God knew what he was asking this “*friend of God*”
 – Jam. 2:23; cf. 2 Chron. 20:7)

God asked Abraham to walk from Beersheba to Mt. Moriah (i.e. Jerusalem), a three-day journey of 60 miles, giving him plenty of time to rethink this. For 72 hours he pondered this as he walked side-by-side with his son, knowing he must soon slit his throat and burn his corpse like he would a lamb or ram. During their travel Isaac, likely a teen by now, pierces his dad’s heart by asking, “*where is the lamb for the offering*?” All he can reply is, “*God will provide*.”

When in sight of the mountain to which God had pointed them, the patriarch turns to his two servants and says words that will live forever in all our hearts, “*We shall return*!” Hebrews would later give us divine commentary as to what he meant: “*concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense”* (Heb. 11:19). Even though he had never seen a dead man come back to life, he firmly believed God’s promise that Isaac would live to bear children. That’s faith!

Now we come to “The Rest Of The Story.” Two thousand years after this incredible act of faith, the story is repeated, but with a twist. God takes Abraham’s place and plays the father. Jesus takes Isaac’s place as the beloved son of promise. The mountain is the same spot of execution. The only difference is that no angel stops the violent slaughter. No voice stays the hand of the Roman soldiers as they scourge the flesh off His back, drive spikes through His hands and feet, and thrust a spear through His side. No one mercifully ends this madness.

Abraham’s *test* was actually a warmup to God’s “test.” Abraham’s son was spared to live for 180 years, bearing children and living to see his legacy grow and prosper. God’s Son was not spared, dying horribly at the young age of 33, never marrying or bearing any children. God “*tested*” Abraham in 2000 B.C. so that in 30 A.D. we could then hear Him say, “Now you know the rest of the story.”

As Paul Harvey signed off, so now I sign off…

*“Rick Lanning …pause …pause …pause … Good Day.”*