

KNOWING GOD

Abraham was a sinner as we all are, but he was one who trusted God always. Because of his trust, God deemed him to be righteous.

Romans 4:22b *his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."* [ESV]

Abraham trusted God, because he knew God, not in the sense of having read about God or having some thoughts about God or having heard a sermon on God.

Rather Abraham knew God as, for example, we know a man when we hear his voice, or see his deportment or watch how he walks: we do not need to do a careful analysis of the evidence or an exegesis of the text of his utterance.

We just simply "know" that it is he, because we know that man. We know that man in and by our heart (where the spirit resides), not in our rational mind.

Before we consider Abraham, let us learn what Job discovered at the end of his trial and misery.

Job was a good person; he was without any blame — in the judgment of God.

Job 1:8 *The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."* [NASB]

However, this is what Job said to the Lord at the end of his trial:

Job 42:5–6 *"I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. ⁶I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."* [NLT]

At the end, Job had come to know God directly: Job had developed a direct relationship with the Lord, not just a theoretical knowledge or a philosophy.

Because of that direct experience and knowledge, he was glad to repent of his arrogance before the supreme Creator.

Now we see how Abraham had such direct personal knowledge of God from the moment God called him:

Genesis 12:1, 4a *The Lord said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ^{4a}So Abram went, as the Lord had told him,* [HCSB]

Abraham obeyed immediately: no questions asked, because he knew the Lord.

Several decades later, God tested the trust and obedience of Abraham:

Genesis 22:2 *"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."* [NLT]

Again Abraham obeyed immediately — no questions asked.

Genesis 22:3a *The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac.* [NLT]

One may think that this time God, besides cruelty, was also demonstrating a totally self-contradictory and illogical behavior: first promising a son from whom many nations will spring, then after his birth ordering Abraham to kill that very only son.

It was to become even more contradictory and illogical: after having requested so unequivocally the sacrifice of Isaac, God totally countermanded — and at the last possible moment — His first command:

Genesis 22:11–12a *At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!" ^{12a}"Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said.* [NLT]

A logical person, even an obedient one, might have thought: "Surely this is the devil deceiving me; he is trying to use my common sense, fatherly love and pride to prevent me from obeying the clear command God gave me just yesterday."

Abraham did not think so, because he knew the Living God so well that he recognized His voice unmistakably: again he was able to obey immediately.

Abraham unhesitatingly heeded the command both times, because of his devotion to God and not to his own common sense and understanding.

The apostle Paul explained this very clearly:

Romans 4:13 *Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. [NLT]*

Obedience to the countermanding of the sacrifice and murder of Isaac is as much an example, as obedience to the command to sacrifice him in the first place.

In the first place, obedience could have been overwhelmed by Abraham's love for his son and even by simple decency; but he demonstrated that he loved God more than his son and his own sense of decency.

Luke 14:26 *"If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple." [NLT]*

In the second place, obedience could have been overcome by Abraham's logic and pride: why would God behave so inconsistently and illogically?

Wouldn't Abraham look like a fool for not obeying God's original command?

Is it not true that God does not change His mind, as men do? What if it were the tempter to proffer the countermand and thus cause him to violate the command?

Abraham's knew God's voice and did not have to rely on his own understanding and make up a theology for the circumstances.

He just let himself hear and he knew it was the Lord.

Such is the importance and the significance of "knowing God" and it is emphasized throughout the scriptures:

Let us consider Moses:

Exodus 33:13 *"Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." [ESV]*

Here is a prophet:

Hosea 6:6 *I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings. [NLT]*

And Jesus in the gospel:

John 10:14 *"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me," [NLT]*

Do I "know Him"? Do you "know Him"? Or have we just heard of Him, being preached?

Let us pray that we may know Him, as Abraham did and demonstrated by his obedience.