

## **The Gift of Sacrifice**

As a teenager we used to watch the World at War series. It was abundantly clear that War is a terrible thing. In the news we can see what is happening in the Ukraine, so many innocent lives have been taken or altered for good. Not only lives being affected but the infrastructure is destroyed.

I recall a business trip to Stuttgart, Germany, many years ago. There is a hill called Birkenkopf which is part of the Schuttenberg hills in the middle of this area and it is made from all the ruins that had been moved to form this big hill. On the top you can see parts of buildings.

Even though war in itself is a tragic event, it does bring out some incredible stories. Here is one of sacrifice but not direct sacrifice.

This is a true story which took place in WW2.

Story of the B17 Flying Fortress Bomber “Ye Olde Pub”

– see extra doc

Effectively what did Franz Stigler do for Charlie Brown and what remained of his depleted crew? He put his reputation and effectively his life on the line to allow the

enemy to have the opportunity to get back home safely. An amazing feat of humanity.

Franz Stigler, a highly decorated pilot, if found out would have been court martialled and would most certainly have faced the firing squad. He put his life at risk.

However as we read, in 1990 Charlie Brown was able to locate Franz Stigler and when he received a phone call from him he was sceptical but after confirming some of the key events of that day, Charlie Brown was convinced he had found the German pilot. Until their deaths, which were only months apart in 2008, they were solid friends.

What comes out from this is the character of the German as it is said he was a veteran pilot with an iron sense of right and wrong; a man who would never kick a man when he is down. He just did what his inner compass made him do, the right thing. He indirectly made a sacrifice.

Now let's look at what does Sacrifice mean:

The dictionary says the following:

- To give up something for something else.
- To sacrifice a life for a god

This word is mentioned 218 times in the Bible.

Sacrifice is something that just fills the Bible from cover to cover. Even today, in our daily walk, many sacrifices are made. However, in this modern world, it is seldom found.

The Bible mentions 2 very important sacrifices.

**The first involves Abraham** – the sacrifice of Isaac. His beloved son whom God had promised that through whom the world will benefit. All nations would benefit from Abrahams offspring – let's read Genesis 22

**Gen 22:1** And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

**Gen 22:2** And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

**Gen 22:3** And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

**Gen 22:4** Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

**Gen 22:5** And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

**Gen 22:6** And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

**Gen 22:7** And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

**Gen 22:8** And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

**Gen 22:9** And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

**Gen 22:10** And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

**Gen 22:11** And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

**Gen 22:12** And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

**Gen 22:13** And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

The place was called Jehovah Jira – God is my provider.

Abraham's mind must have been in overdrive as he contemplated what he was instructed to do.

- What was going through Abrahams mind when God gave him instructions to sacrifice Isaac?
- What was God thinking, first the promise, the Covenant and then this act.
- Did Abraham misinterpret Gods message to him?

If we scrutinize this sacrifice we can see at least 5 important points.

- Abraham was 100 year when Isaac was born, Sarah was 90. At this age, what were the chances of a replacement son to fulfil the promise?
- Abraham without question, trusted God and followed his instructions.
- Abraham believed that because Isaac was his son who God had promised would bless the world, he believed that God would raise Isaac up from death if he was sacrificed.
- Abraham's faith was tested and he trusted God.
- God provided a solution right at the end.

Just when Abraham was at the point of slaying his son, the son he had waited for all his life, God stopped him in his tracks and provided a solution. Abraham's faith was unquestionable.

How does our faith compare?

I have had many of what I call my "Isaac moments". These are when I totally trust God to provide a way out and I put my faith in Him to provide a solution. These events seem to be happening more often than not in recent times.

Sometimes the pressure is just too much to bare, so that I just hand over full control to God. Nothing more can be done but to surrender to Him.

Do you have those moments?

**Then the other Sacrifice is that of Jesus** - This sacrifice was so special it was planned from Genesis 3 and not an accidental death. God gave his only Son Jesus to die a cruel death so that we, who are sinful, can be forgiven. John 3 vs 16.

Sometimes we forget this event and the depth and impact on our lives.

Leading up to Jesus' death on the cross, he was not totally comfortable about it as in the Garden of Gethsemane, we read how he agonised and prayed that His Father would take away the "Cup" but Jesus surrendered to the Father's will.

We read in Matt 26:

**Mat 26:36** Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, **Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.**

**Mat 26:37** And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

**Mat 26:38** Then saith he unto them, **My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.**

**Mat 26:39** And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, **O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.**

Mat 26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, **What, could ye not watch with me one hour?**

Mat 26:41 **Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.**

Mat 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, **O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.**

The other day Cameron, our grandson and I were driving to my office. I always use our alone time to talk about Jesus and his love for us. We spoke about the Cross. I started but Cameron finished with his comments about the nails driven into Jesus' hands and feet. I said it was a cruel death and that was the way of the people at the time. Then Cameron went on to mention the thorns of the crown pushed onto Jesus' head. Cameron said it must have damaged his brain. I corrected him by saying the scull is very strong but the thorns would have dug in deep and the pain would have been excruciating. Having lived in Africa, you would know of the Thorn Tree. Long thorns that are about 2 – 3 inches long and when you get one into your flesh, you certainly know about it. The African folk use the branches to make what is call a kraal which is a sort of pen to keep animals in and predators out.

The Job Description for the Saviour of the world would have only one line:

Someone who is sinless who must offer their life as a living sacrifice for those that have sinned.

As read in 1 Peter 2:23 .....

**1Pe 2:22** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

**1Pe 2:23** Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

**1Pe 2:24** Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

**1Pe 2:25** For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Imagine the advert:

Looking for a Saviour of the world. Not for everyone, but if you are blameless, pure and with sin or blemish, you should apply.

Perks of the job, you will sit at the right hand of God and on the throne, the downside is you will be put to death in the most cruel manner and for no humanly perceivable reason.

But you will be raised again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

Such a cruel death for one that was sinless.

But what is important is that this, Jesus:

1. Knew of the plan of Salvation through the cross.
2. He felt the anguish of what lay ahead of him.
3. He knew he was not going to go through the process without pain and suffering just like you and I would.
4. He put his total trust in the Father and surrendered to Him.
5. He knew he would be banished for our sin.
6. He knew he would rise again at the will of the Father.
7. His Faith was unquestionable. Faith that His Father would not fail him

In doing so, he defeated death so that we can have life.

What a celebration!

During those three days, he suffered the rejection of God, baring out sin.

He bore our sins and our future sins so we can rejoice that we who were once lost are now found.

How profound is our Salvation plan.

What is does not cease to amaze me is this way to salvation is so simple but yet rejected by so many.

Salvation we do not have to work for, nothing to be earned but a Salvation that is freely given and at no cost to us but just to follow Him and put our Faith in Him.

Let us celebrate the sacrifice made for us and rejoice in the fact that we are called by His Name.

As we start a new calendar year in this church, let's us stay strong and be united in His love for us.

Let us pray.