

# ***“Abraham: The Lord Will Provide”***

**GENESIS 22:1-19**

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At several very strategic points throughout the Bible, God identifies Himself as being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I would like for us to look into that a little bit deeper on December 25 of this year (three weeks from this morning), but as we prepare for that lesson, I would like for us to study Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, starting this morning with Abraham, one of the greatest characters in the entire Bible. When we start looking through the Bible, we discover that Abraham is mentioned by name a total of 283 times, and his life is described in 27 out of the 66 books of the Bible, which certainly gives us at least some idea of what God thought of this man. As we examine the Scriptures, we find that Abraham lived in Ur, a city along the Euphrates River, not far from the Persian Gulf, in what is now the nation of Iraq. He lived in what we sometimes refer to as the Patriarchal Age, a time when God communicated directly to heads of households, and in that time, we find that Abram was rather unusual because he listened to God, he was faithful to God, and he obeyed God's laws. For that reason, God chose Abram to be the beginning of a new nation, a nation whose God would be the Lord, a group of people through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, a reference to the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God.

Certainly we understand that Abraham was not perfect. However, when we look at Abraham's life as a whole, we find that he was on the right path, we find that Abraham was a man of great faith, from the time when he was first called to leave his home in Ur to the time of his death at the age of 175. But probably the reason why most of us remember Abraham goes back to one of the most dramatic scenes in his life (recorded for us in Genesis 22), as Abraham's faith is put to the test with God's command to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's only son (p. 31). Hopefully you have had a chance to look at some of the artwork that has been posted in the entryway this morning. As you can see, it is a dramatic scene that has been captured in a very dramatic way by many artists down through the years.

At this time in his life, Abraham was more than a hundred years old, the date is roughly 1900 BC, Isaac is perhaps somewhere in his young teenage years, and the account is truly shocking. It reaches out and grabs us, and pulls us in. This morning, then, I would like for us to study the first 19 verses of Genesis 22, and I would invite all of us to try to put the cares of this world behind us, and I would invite all of us to try to learn something new this morning as we look at this passage with a fresh set of eyes, as we open ourselves up to the word of God, as we allow the word of God to work in our hearts. In fact, this morning I would invite you to imagine that we are on a journey similar to that of Abraham, and no matter where we are on that journey,

there is some kind of decision sitting right there in front of us. In this case, Abraham's faith is challenged with an act of worship. As we study, then, I would like to divide our text into three short paragraphs as we allow ourselves to be changed by studying what God wants us to learn from this challenge to Abraham's faith.

I. **And one of the first things we notice in this chapter is that ABRAHAM'S FAITH IS TESTED (verses 1-2).**

Let us please notice God's command in verses 1-2,

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

God, therefore (according to verse 1), ***"tested Abraham."*** Today, we know the value of testing. We think of publications like Consumer Reports, that put products through some difficult circumstances, not for the purpose of destroying the product, but for the purpose of proving which products are safe and reliable. Hundreds of years later, God would go on to test His nation in a similar way, in Deuteronomy 8:2 (a passage that we will consider in our Wednesday class in just a few weeks), we find that God led the people into the wilderness for forty years for a very specific reason, ***"...that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."*** And so in a similar way, God also tested Abraham, the father of this nation.

But as we discover in verse 2, the test is beyond what Abraham ever could have imagined as God gives the command. And I would like for us to notice the four descriptions God gives, putting the emphasis on how precious we know Isaac must have been, ***"...your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac."***

We think about that command, and we can hardly even imagine a test of our obedience being so difficult. Normally, our faith is tested in more subtle ways; perhaps in how we interact with the people around us, are we kind, do we tell the truth, do we treat others with compassion? But for Abraham, the test was far more spectacular, the test was a sacrifice that would cost Abraham more than he ever could have imagined. This was giving to God the one thing that mattered more than anything, his only son, the son of promise, the son through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

The name ***"Isaac,"*** by the way, literally means "laughter," and there's a good reason for that. In Genesis 17:17, the Bible gives us Abraham's reaction to God's promise that he would have a son, ***"Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'"*** To Abraham, this was funny! To Abraham, this was ridiculous! It was fall-on-your face funny! And then, in the next chapter, remember what happened when the Lord came and visited Abraham with a message, ***"I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son."*** The Bible says that, ***"Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?' The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh...?' But Sarah denied it saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"'*** How interesting! God seems to be playing with them a little bit there! God seems to have had a sense of humor. And so when the child was born, they named him Isaac, or "Laughter." But here we are maybe 12-13 years later, and God says, ***"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, [Laughter] (or***

*Isaac), and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering....”* Not funny at all. God was testing Abraham. God wanted Abraham to make a choice: God or the boy, God or the love of Abraham’s life.

The Bible tells us that God is a jealous God. He does not share first place with any other god, and so Abraham had to make choice: God or family, God or whatever else might have been more important. And that is a choice that we need to make. As Jesus said in Matthew 10, ***“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”*** Abraham had to pass that test, and that is a test that we must pass as well.

And that is what worship is about: Reminding ourselves what is truly important. When we come here every Sunday morning, we are telling God, “You mean everything to us!” We are telling God, “You are our reason for living!” We are telling God, “You are number one! You are at the top of our priorities!” That’s why when we worship we make every effort to worship in the way that God has directed us to worship. We do not come here to entertain each other, but we come here to pour our hearts out to God, to remind ourselves that God has the place of greatest honor. Honoring God, in fact, is the first thing we do on the first day of every week. We wake up on the first morning of each week, and we honor God for who He is. So first of all, we have a command, we have a challenge, we have a test.

## II. Let us now go on and look at **ABRAHAM’S RESPONSE TO THIS TEST** (in verses 3-10).

Let’s see what happens next in verses 3-10,

***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 wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.***

God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, and the Bible tells us that Abraham responded immediately. As far as we are told, he did not ask for clarification, he did not bargain for a later date, he did not argue with God, he did not complain, he did not beg for mercy, he did not ask for advice from his wife or from his friends, he did not allow his feelings to keep him from doing what God said needed to be done, but he left on that journey right away, without delay. Sometimes today, it is easy to put things off, “I will trust God when my finances get a little better, I will obey God when I work a few things out here and there,” but Abraham hears the command and obeys immediately. We might say that Abraham was walking by faith, not by sight.

After traveling for three days, the place of sacrifice comes into view, and we start to see Abraham's faith working. Abraham turns to his servants and says, ***"Stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."*** Did you catch that? Abraham uses the word ***"worship"*** for the first time in the entire Bible, and when he does, he is confident that both he and Isaac will go worship and that they will then come back together. We don't have the details here, but we do learn more over in Hebrews 11. You might want to turn there just briefly, because it is almost a parallel account. In Hebrews 11:17-19, the Bible says that, ***"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.' He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."*** Did you catch that? By faith, Abraham assumed that God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead! God has promised that Isaac is the child through whom all the nations on earth will be blessed, God now wants me to kill him; therefore, God must be planning on bringing him back from the dead. However, what we might not realize is that as far as the Scriptures are concerned, no one in the history of the world up to this point has ever been raised from the dead. According to the Scriptures, the first resurrection doesn't happen until the days of Elijah, more than a thousand years later. Abraham, then, has faith that God will do something that He has never done before.

Of course, as Abraham and his son continue on by themselves, Isaac has a question. Even as a young man, he has apparently watched his father offer many sacrifices, and Isaac knows that something is different with this one, he knows that something is missing, and so he asks his father, ***"The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"*** Abraham's faith continues to grow stronger. The gears are turning as Abraham assumes that in some way God will provide an alternative. And with that attitude, Abraham is able to say with confidence, with all of his heart, ***"God will provide!"*** The word he uses refers to God seeing. In Latin, the word ***"provide"*** means, "to see before," PRO=BEFORE + VIDERE (video)=to see. In other words, Abraham could not really see a good way out of this, but Abraham knew that God could see. By faith, Abraham knew that God in His wisdom would provide some way out of this situation. But then they get within sight of the place of sacrifice, and the alternative is not there, so Abraham builds an altar, arranges the wood, ties up his only son, lays him on the altar and stretches out his hand with the knife, fully intending to take his son's life.

I don't even know if it's possible, but can we just try to imagine what was going through Abraham's mind right at this moment? Right at that moment, what was Abraham thinking? Was Abraham on anything even close to an emotional high at this point? No, but rather, it was a struggle! This was a difficult test, a test of faith, a test to see whether Abraham would follow God's instructions. Sometimes brother Harold will refer to the church just east of here (off of Cottage Grove Road), the church that advertises on its sign that they have "Way Cool Worship." Do you think that Abraham thought that this worship he was about to offer was "way cool"? Do you think Abraham said to Isaac, "Hey, let's go do some 'way cool worship' together"? No! And so here (where the word "worship" is used in the Bible for the very first time, we have a reminder that appropriate worship can be a challenge. Appropriate worship may not feel very "cool" at the time. And we learn here that worship is not necessarily for our benefit. Yes, we get something out of it, but worship is primarily what we put into it, what we offer to God. When Abraham uses the word ***"worship"*** up in verse 5, he uses a word that literally refers to "bowing down," to "paying homage," to lying down "prostrate" with our faces on the ground. When we worship, the idea is that we surrender our hearts to God, we hold nothing back, we are telling God, "It is all about You!"

Today, the circumstances might not be quite as dramatic, and yet regardless of how difficult our obedience to God's commands might seem to us at the time, faith allows us to put our trust in God. Are we thinking that

there is no way out of a sinful situation? God can see a way through that! Are we thinking that some habit or addiction might just be too difficult to overcome? God can see a way through that! Are we thinking that some sacrifice we need to make is just too much to bear? God can see a way through that! The Lord will provide! And when we follow through with faith, when we obey even when it is difficult, our worship is pleasing to God. As James said in James 2, ***“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God.”*** God told Abraham what to do, and Abraham did it immediately: Faith demonstrated through obedience.

III. **Most of us already know the end of this story, but let us now look at the next few verses as we consider THE BLESSING, THAT IS, GOD’S PROVISION.**

Abraham’s hand is raised with the knife; he is ready to sacrifice his son, and we pick up with verse 11,

***But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the Lord it will be provided.” Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.***

As a result of what happened here, I would suggest that Abraham gained a much deeper relationship with God. For a moment, just try to imagine Abraham’s joy as the angel stopped him from killing Isaac. I can see his heart just pounding out of his chest as he’s at that point, and then the angel and the ram, and the weight has been lifted. I can imagine Abraham just hugging Isaac. I can imagine tears being shed. I can imagine laughter. I can imagine relief. I can imagine Abraham saying, “Don’t tell mom!” What I cannot imagine is Abraham and Isaac walking back home talking about how they didn’t get anything out of worship that day! Because, again, the point of worship is not what we get out of it. The point is opening our hearts to God with faithful obedience. And the bonus here in Genesis 22 is that Abraham gains God’s approval.

At this point, Abraham offered up the ram as a burnt offering instead of his son, and then he renamed the place, ***“The Lord will provide,”*** and Moses (the author) points out that the name of that place was still being used at the time this book was written, more than 400 years later, ***“On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”***

**Conclusion:**

As we close our thoughts on this passage, I would like to point out a little detail that we skipped over earlier, the fact that Abraham was told to travel so that he could make this sacrifice in the mountains of Moriah. Mt. Moriah is mentioned only one other time in the Bible, in 2 Chronicles 3 (nearly a thousand years after the time of Abraham), and Mt. Moriah is described as the place where Solomon would build the temple. It is identified as the place where King David had purchased the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite so that he could offer a sacrifice to God. Remember: Araunah offered it to David free of charge, but David refused, "I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). That was here! And then roughly a thousand years after that, this then would be the same place where Jesus would come to do much of His preaching and the place where He would ultimately offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. In other words, the story of Isaac is actually the story of Jesus. Did you catch the fact that Isaac carried his own wood? Jesus also carried the cross. Did you notice that Isaac is referred to here as Abraham's "**only son**"? Jesus is also described as being God's only Son. Did you catch the fact that Isaac's birth was foretold by God and that his conception was miraculous in at least some way? The conception and birth of Jesus was also foretold and was also miraculous (obviously in a much more profound way). Did you notice that both Isaac and Jesus were "**bound**" as the time of death came closer? But then on a much deeper level, as we look at the sacrifice itself, we realize the lamb (provided by God) took Isaac's place. In the same way, Jesus (as the Lamb of God) took our place. It would certainly be safe to say that God never tells anyone to do something that He is not willing to do Himself. But even deeper than that, what God prevented Abraham from doing, God actually did by allowing His only Son to suffer and die. There was no last-minute rescue. There was no last-minute substitute for the Son of God. And that is the difference: Isaac was saved, but Jesus was allowed to die. As John the Baptist once said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29).

This morning, as we think about what God has done for us, as we think about how God has provided for us, let us respond as Abraham did, let us accept the challenge to put God in first place. That's what worship is! Worship is coming to God and admitting that He is everything to us. If we are willing to put God in first place as Abraham did, then we will also be blessed with God's approval. As was read for us earlier, "**...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**" We prove our faith in God by putting God in first place. So what? What does this mean to us? It means that we sacrifice our time for God. It means that we involve our children in worship. It means that we take our children with us to visit the elderly members of the congregation. It means that we sign up for preparing the communion and we involve our kids by having them help us with that. For those who have not yet obeyed the gospel, we prove our faith by turning away from sin. We prove our faith by allowing ourselves to be briefly dipped in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions, please ask, but if you are ready to respond to God in faith, you can let us know as we sing this next song...

To comment on this lesson: [foullakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:foullakeschurch@gmail.com)