

Obedience and Sacrifice to Blessing

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[0:00] I want you to turn to Genesis. That's where we're going to start this morning.! Genesis chapter 22. And we're going to look at an account that I'm sure that you've heard before,! you've read before, you've studied before.

It's the story of Abraham and Isaac and a sacrifice that was asked of Abraham. And it was a big ask, a very big ask that God asked Abraham to do.

And you can look at this story and think, well, is it a story of obedience? Is it a story of sacrifice? Is it a story of blessing? You know what the answer is? Yes, to all those.

It's a story of all that. So again, Genesis chapter 22. We're going to start in the first verse. I really encourage you to follow along. Bring your Bibles. Be in God's Word. You get tired of hearing me say this, but I'm going to keep saying it.

If you ever forget your Bible, there are lots of them in the entrance there. Grab one. Use it. If you don't have a Bible, keep it. If you know somebody that needs a Bible, give it away. We can buy more.

[0:59] We need to be in God's Word. So if you found that this morning, Genesis 22, if you are able, I'm going to ask that you would stand as we read God's Word, if you're able this morning. Genesis chapter 22, beginning in the first verse, and this is what God's Word shares.

And it came to pass after these things that God did test Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, behold, here I am.

And he said, take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell you of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering and rose up and went to the place of which God had told him.

Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his son, to these young men, abide you here with the donkey and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you.

[2:09] 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.

And Isaac spoke to 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? And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

So they went both of them together 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.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called to him out of the heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, here am I.

And he said, lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

[3:15] 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.

And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh, as it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of the heaven the second time.

And he said, by myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, that in blessing I will bless you.

And in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice. Let's pray together this morning.

[4:15] Lord God, we thank you again that we can be here together in your house. And Lord, I pray that you would help every one of us to understand that we are, we're not here by accident. You've called us, you've brought us to this place.

It's not a question of whether your spirit is here among us, it is. The only question is where are our hearts and where are our minds? And Lord, this morning I pray that our hearts are soft and I pray that our minds are thinking of you and thinking of your message this morning and what you have for us.

And Lord, help us to realize that the message you have from your word, that you're always desiring to speak to us and help us to learn and grow. But it's up to us to have minds that are open, hearts that are open, ears that are ready to hear and to absorb what you have for us.

We can let it go in one ear and out the other. We can spend this time thinking about weekend activities or lunch today or whatever we have going on. We can do that. But Lord, I pray instead that we would spend the next few moments just focusing on your message for us, focusing on what it is you want us to understand and how we can draw closer to you.

So speak to our hearts this morning. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. You can be seated this morning. You know, last week we talked about, obviously this is the 4th of July week, and we talked about liberty.

[5:43] We talked about freedom. And we talk about the fact that when we get freedom as believers, the freedom when we accept Jesus Christ, and we're free from sin, is what the Bible says.

We're washed white as snow when we have the blood of Christ over us, that we have freedom from sin, but then that freedom is to be used for something. It's not just for our own benefit.

It's also to use to show to others and to share with others. So we talked about that last week. But obviously just yesterday, we celebrated Independence Day. And one of the other things, when you start thinking about our nation, when you start thinking about Independence Day and what that really means, it really can't be separated from that word sacrifice.

Because the freedoms that we have, the nation that we have, we have because there was a sacrifice made. Do we understand that? Do we understand that?

Are you awake? I know a lot of people look tired coming in this morning, so we better turn to the person next to you and tell them to wake up. If their eyes are closed, give them a good elbow.

[6:49] All right. When you start talking about Independence, it requires sacrifice. We think of our nation that we live in.

We think about Independence Day and we think about the Declaration of Independence. And how many men sign that? Do you know? This isn't just a history lesson, but I want you to begin to think about this. How many men sign the Declaration of Independence?

Do you know? All of them. One in every crowd. 56 men signed the Declaration of Independence. What we often don't think about, we picture them in a room signing this, and that's about all we picture. But the other thing we have to understand, as they signed that Declaration of Independence, they were taking a huge risk.

And they knew that they were probably going to make a sacrifice to gain that independence. And they did. As you look at how history unfolds after they signed the Declaration of Independence, the reality is of those 56 signers, five would go on to be captured and tortured.

[8:02] Nine of them died from wounds or conditions during the war. Twelve of them had their homes ransacked and burned. Several of them who were tremendously wealthy.

There were a couple that were millionaires, which at the time, to be a millionaire would be like a billionaire today. They had this fortune. They died broke.

Why? Because of their belief in the Declaration of Independence and their willingness to sign it. And you think of the nation that we live in. In the Revolutionary War, there were 25,000 to 30,000 that died.

That's a sacrifice, isn't it? That was 1% of the population of the United States then. If you took 1% of the population now, do you know how many that would be?

It would be about 3.4 million people. That was a sacrifice that was made. Now, what was the result in the end of that sacrifice? Freedom.

[9:06] The result in the end was a blessing that you and I are experiencing today, aren't we? Do we experience a blessing of freedom? But we have to understand, to experience that blessing, a sacrifice was made first.

As we read here in Genesis, that's also what we see in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was asked to make a sacrifice.

sacrifice. And when you look at it, I said earlier it was a big ask. What an incredible thing. God asked him to give up what? To sacrifice what? His son.

How many children did he have? One. He was asked to give up the only son that he had. That is a sacrifice, isn't it?

And when God asked Abraham that question, or asked him to give up his son, what was Abraham's response? He obeyed.

[10:08] You know, my mind, the way it works, I sometimes wish there were more verses here that gave an insight into what was going through Abraham's mind during this time.

He's asked to give up his son. He was human. What are some thoughts that you think he may have had? What will Sarah say?

What is my wife going to think about this? That would definitely be a question. Why? Do you think he would ask why? Would you have asked why? I think in his mind, that question was probably there, why?

And I was just, I guess I had never, every time you read God's words, something else stands out to you. But what stood out to me is, Abraham had lots of time to think about the sacrifice he was going to have to make.

God asked him to make it, and then he had to prepare everything to make the trip, didn't he? If you look in verse 3, Abraham rose up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went to the place which God had told him.

[11:18] There's a lot of stuff he did in there, isn't it? The one thing that really caught my attention that I had never noticed before, it says he split the wood. Have you ever split wood? Now, he didn't have one of those wood splitters.

You put it in and it just splits them. So how do you think he split it? By hand with an axe, and he's out splitting wood. What do you think was on his mind while he was splitting wood?

I mean, it takes some time to do that. What am I doing? Why is God asking me this? Can I go through with this? Because this sacrifice was an incredible thing that God was asking of him.

And we find that Abraham was willing to go through with it. And he split the wood, and he loaded it all up, and he made the trip, and he prepared the altar, and he even got to the point where he bound his son to sacrifice him.

And we can think, well, why would God ask that? And we can think all those questions. It said God did this to test Abraham, to see how dedicated are you really to me?

[12:23] What are you really willing to give up for me? What are you willing to sacrifice for me? The answer that Abraham gave through his actions was, he was willing to sacrifice everything for God.

Would that be easy? But again, when a tremendous sacrifice is made, what is the result of that? We said our country, there is a tremendous sacrifice made, and what was the result?

A blessing. The freedom that we have. Abraham was willing to make this tremendous sacrifice. What was the result of it? Everybody say blessing.

Because I want you to look towards the end that we read in verse 16. After God sees that Abraham is willing to make this sacrifice, He tells Abraham the blessing that he's going to receive because he was willing to make this sacrifice.

By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing. So because you were willing to sacrifice everything, and you have not withheld your son, your only son.

[13:38] Think about what he's saying here. You're not withholding anything from me. Because you are not withholding anything from me. Do we ever withhold anything from God? We try.

Do we ever say, okay God, I'll give you this, but you know, I kind of like this thing over here. I'm not sure I'm willing to give it up. God, I know you want me to do this, but really I want to do this thing over here.

Sacrificing self, sacrificing our own desire for God's will, is one of the biggest sacrifices that God asks us to make. But have no doubt, God asks us to make that sacrifice.

God expects us to put Him at what place in our life? First, ahead of everybody, including ourselves. But God said, because you have done this thing, and you have not withheld your son, you've not withheld the most important thing in your life, you've not withheld it from me. Because of that, look in verse 17.

[14 : 42] Here's what comes as a result. When we're willing to yield everything, give up everything, to God. In blessing, I will bless you, and in multiplying, I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and your seed shall possess the gate of His enemies.

What does all that mean? What does all that mean? It's not a trick question. You're going to have a huge family.

They're going to multiply. At this point, how many did He have? One. One. Isaac. And He thought He was going to have to sacrifice him. If He sacrifices His only son, what happens to the family name at that point in time?

It ends there, unless He has more children. But God's saying, because you are willing to give Him up, I'm going to bless you. Your generation, the ones that come after you, are going to be like the stars in the sky.

Going to be like the sand on the seashore. How many of you have been to a beach this summer so far? Raise your hand. Have you been to a beach? Okay.

[15 : 49] Did any of you count the grains of sand on the seashore? Yeah, people would really think you're nuts. Everybody's playing in the water, and you're over there. One, two. You realize it's huge, and that's what it means.

It means He's just going to multiply His family. And we know that God did bless Abraham, and that ended up being the people of Israel. But God says, I'm going to bless you, because you were willing to give up everything.

And not only bless you, but look in verse 18. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. So He wasn't only going to bless Abraham's family, but who else?

All the nations. Everybody else is going to be blessed through you. When we get to the point where we are willing to sacrifice and give up everything to God, do we receive a blessing in the end?

Yes. Absolutely. But that sacrifice is necessary. I want you to look in the New Testament. I want you to look in Ephesians 5. Ephesians, right after Galatians, right before Philippians.

[16 : 57] Ephesians 5. Just two verses. The first two verses. Abraham was obedient to God and willing to sacrifice everything.

That is the key. That's what we're talking about this morning. Look in Ephesians 5, the first two verses. Be you therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. That word sacrifice is in there, isn't it? And it's talking about Jesus. And the same is true with Jesus that we've just been talking about. Jesus was obedient, wasn't He?

All through His ministry, all through His time here on earth, do you know what Jesus said? I am here to do My Father's will. He didn't say, I'm here to do whatever I want.

I'm the Son of God, so I can do whatever. He said, I am here to do My Father's will. He was obedient, wasn't He? And His Father said, you're going to go to the cross, and you're going to suffer, and you're going to die on the cross.

[18 : 06] God asked Abraham to make a difficult sacrifice, didn't He? Did God ask His own Son to make a difficult sacrifice? Yes. Did Jesus know the pain that He was going to have to endure?

Did He know the suffering? Being mocked, being spit on. Jesus knew all that. And God said, this is My plan for you. This is the sacrifice that I'm asking you to make. And guess what?

Jesus was obedient. And He laid down His life. He gave it all as a sacrifice for us.

So He was willing to sacrifice it all. Was there, and this should be a no-brainer, was there a blessing that came from that? What was the blessing that came from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

Salvation. For anyone that accepts it. There is no greater blessing than that. But folks, again, that tremendous blessing, what did it require?

[19:12] Sacrifice. We like the blessing part. Don't we? Do you like to be blessed? Anybody in here, have you ever said, boy, I do not want to be blessed today at all? Had enough, no more blessing.

Am I at my limit? Anybody ever said that? No, we want blessings. We like blessings. But the sacrifice part, that's where it's hard, isn't it?

I mean, I don't think any of us ever find ourselves saying, I want to sacrifice more. I want to give up more. That's the hard part. But folks, the blessing requires sacrifice.

It requires being willing to give up. There's one other scripture I want you to look in. This is the last one we're going to turn to. It's in Romans chapter 6. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and then Romans chapter 6.

Romans 6. I'll give you a minute to find it. Verse 13. Romans 6, verse 13. And again, sacrifice, it means giving up something.

[20:18] And that's what this verse talks about. Romans 6, 13. Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God.

What does it mean to yield? To surrender, to give up. Isn't that what it means to yield? To give up. What does it tell us here that we're supposed to yield ourselves to?

Yield yourselves to God. That means give yourself up to God. Give up self. Give up your own desires for what God wants in your life. Be willing to give it all to God, not putting anything else in front of Him.

Saying, Lord, what do you want from my life? Because it's not about what I want, it's about what you want. And folks, that is a hard spot sometimes to get to. To understand, it is not about what I want. It should be as believers about what God wants in our lives. Yield ourselves up to God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

[21:30] In other words, allowing God to use us in any way God wants to use us. What if God asks you to do something you don't really want to do? Do you think God would ever ask that? I know sometimes you say, well, God wouldn't really ask me something I don't want to do.

Folks, that's not true. You understand that, right? Do you think Abraham said, I really want to sacrifice my only son? No. But God asked him to do something that he really didn't want to do.

He didn't want to have to do that. When Jesus Christ was going to the cross, did he really want to go through all that? Again, that's not a trick question.

What did he say when he was praying in the garden? Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me. In other words, if there's another way, that'd be okay.

I'd rather not go through all this suffering. But what did Christ say at the end of that? But not my will, but yours. That was Christ yielding his own will to the will of his Father.

[22:36] Folks, that is what God asks of us, to yield our will for God's will. And we may think of that as a sacrifice, as something that is difficult, and it is.

But we have to remember the blessing that comes from that. Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac. He was willing. There was a tremendous blessing. Jesus was asked to sacrifice his life on the cross for us, and he did.

And we all receive a blessing from that. The Bible tells us to yield ourselves to God. Do you think there'll be a blessing from that if we do? Okay.

Romans chapter 6. Look at the last two verses of this chapter. Verse 22. But now being made free from sin and becoming servants of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end...

What are those last two words? Let's read this last part together just to make sure we're sure of this. After the comma. And... You're supposed to read with me.

[23:38] And the end... Everlasting life. Do you see a blessing in the end of that at all? What is it? Everlasting life. And then you look at verse 23.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God... Let's read that part together. But the gift of God is... Eternal life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We can read the end. The sacrifice that we're asked to make is to yield ourselves to God. Give up ourselves to God.

Give up what we want for what God wants in our lives. Sometimes that may mean a change of location. Sometimes that may mean a change in our bank account.

Sometimes that may mean a change in our occupation. Sometimes... I don't know what that may mean for you. God has asked people down through the ages to do all kinds of things that are difficult.

[24 : 37] I don't know what God's going to ask of you, but do you think God will ask something of you? Yes. It may be just to go talk with your neighbor and you're scared of doing that about Jesus Christ. But if God asks you to do that, He wants you to yield up your will and say, Okay, God, do you want me to do that?

I'll do it. He asks us to yield ourselves to Him, to give ourselves up, to give ourself up, and say, God, whatever you want.

And when we do that, when we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and given up self and have the Holy Spirit living within us, what is the blessing that we get?

Eternal life. Is that sacrifice worth it? All the sacrifices we've talked about this morning.

We can talk about our nation. Was that sacrifice worth it? The freedom we have is pretty wonderful.

You look at Abraham. Was that sacrifice he was willing to make worth it? Yes.

[25 : 38] He and all the nations around were blessed. The sacrifice that Jesus made for us, was that worth it? Everybody say yes. Yes. When we're willing to sacrifice our all, is that sacrifice worth it?

Yes. Yes. Now the world will ask you to sacrifice different things that aren't. Is the sacrifice always worth it? No. The world will ask us to sacrifice things, to get ahead in life, to move up on the ladder, to build your bank account.

Is that sacrifice always going to be worth it? No. Because that's for temporary things. And many people get to the end of their lives and they gave up time with family for occupation or whatever, and they realize that was really not worth the sacrifice.

But when God asks you to make a sacrifice, there's one thing I can guarantee you, it will be worth it. It may not be easy, but it will be worth it.

Yield yourselves to God. I think of that word yield, I think anymore, I think of roundabouts. You've all been through some roundabouts, right?

[26 : 49] There's some of defiance, it's not just big cities. When you come up to a roundabout, what do you have to do? Yield. Yield. What does that mean?

Not stopping. Yes, don't stop. Well, that's a whole other discussion. Poor example, maybe. But yielding means to, if there's somebody already there, you're giving up going to let them go.

If you're in a hurry, is that always easy? It's like, no, I want to go first. But yield means saying no, it's not about me right now, it's them getting through. God asks us to yield ourselves to Him.

Our will, our desires, everything we have. I pray this morning that we're a people of God that are willing to say yes, I will yield everything to my God.

I will surrender everything to Him. I am willing to sacrifice and give my all for Him. Because folks, it will be worth it. And if you are here this morning and you've never given your life to Jesus Christ, you've never yielded yourself to Him, I encourage you to do it this morning.

[27 : 56] Because once you do that, it says that you're made free from sin. That you have, your name is written in the book of life. That your sin that's in you is washed white as snow. You have your name written in the book of life and you become part of God's family.

And folks, there's nothing greater than that. If you've never accepted Jesus Christ, I encourage you to do it this morning. But if you accepted Jesus many years ago, I encourage you to be challenged and ask yourself the question, am I yielding my all to Him?

Let's pray this morning. Lord God, we thank You once again for this time that we have together in Your presence. We thank You for Your Word. And Lord, we just pray that You would continue to speak to each one of our hearts.

Lord, if there's anyone in this place right now that has never given their life to Jesus Christ, I pray that they would make that decision this morning, that they wouldn't wait, that they wouldn't hesitate, that they would ask Jesus Christ into their heart and have their sins forgiven and their name written in the book of life.

But Lord, for those that have already done that, have already asked Jesus Christ into their heart, I pray that You'd challenge us with the question, are we giving our all? Are we yielding our all?

[29 : 05] Are we sacrificing our all, our own desire, our own will for Yours? And Lord, help us to remember that it's a sacrifice, but it's a sacrifice that will be worth it.

So help us to have a willing heart to give our all to You. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
Amen. Amen.