

# Genesis 22v1-19 - Faith Strengthened

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 19 March 2023

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[ 0 : 00 ] to Genesis chapter 22. Amen.

So we're continuing in our studies, our series through Genesis. We've been looking at the life of Abraham. We started in chapter 12. And again, I just want to encourage you that if you miss anything, you can follow up on our website.

All the sermons are there. And if you have any questions or anything else, thank you very much. Thank you. About this morning or anything else, well then, just come and talk to me afterwards. Be delighted to chat with you more about it. Well, let's hear God's word.

We're going to read up to verse 19. Genesis 22. Some time later, God tested Abraham.

[ 1 : 51 ] He said to him, Abraham, here I am, he replied. Then God said, take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the region of Moriah.

Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you. Early the next morning, Abraham got up, loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son, Isaac.

When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God told him about.

On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

He said to his servants, stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we'll come back to you. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son, Isaac.

And he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went up together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father, Abraham, Father, yes, my son, Abraham replied.

[ 3 : 02 ] The fire and the wood are here, Isaac said. But where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.

And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told them about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac, laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, Abraham, Abraham.

Here I am, he replied. Do not lay a hand on the boy, he said. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

Abraham looked up and there in the thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

[ 4 : 14 ] So Abraham called that place the Lord will provide. And to this day it is said, on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies. And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me.

Then Abraham returned to the servants and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba. Let's pray.

Father, we can read familiar stories or perhaps a new story. But we pray that by your Spirit we would not only understand it with our minds but we pray that its truth and its message would change our hearts and it would lead to a strengthening of our faith whereby we walk by faith trusting you every step of the way until we are at home in glory with you.

[ 6 : 19 ] So help us now we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Have you ever wondered what God is doing with your life?

everything can be going just fine when all of a sudden you find yourself in a crisis of faith. Perhaps it's a visit to a doctor that reveals well, something you didn't want to hear.

Maybe it's a changed circumstance that leads to financial pressure. Struggles with life that ends in a season of depression.

Maybe it's just something you wouldn't share with anybody else and only you know. How can God let these things happen to me?

Why is he doing it? Well, Abraham's life was sailing along quite smoothly when all of a sudden he was in a crisis of faith.

[ 7 : 32 ] But it isn't without purpose. Through it all God is teaching him and he is teaching us that in all things God provides all that we need so that our faith is strengthened.

In all things in every event and circumstance of our life God will provide all that we need so that our faith is strengthened and we will keep walking with him until we reach our eternal destiny.

four things we're going to look at from this account that will help us to see that this is true. Here's the first one.

The test faith experiences. The test that faith experiences. We can be sure that as we walk the Christian life we are going to face some very testing times.

In fact they will come suddenly and surprisingly. Look at verse 1. Sometime later God tested Abraham.

[ 8 : 56 ] Now testing is not the same as tempting. God isn't trying to trip Abraham up. God is building Abraham up.

You see these times of testing that we face are not random events that we somehow must battle through alone. They are ordained by God for our good.

God isn't in the business of letting accidents happen. There are no accidents with God. Look what it says. God tested Abraham.

Walking through the gym doors I was confronted with a large sign that said no pain no gain. maybe you've seen one of them before.

Apparently when you exercise the micro fibres in your muscles begin to stretch and tear and they rip. But after the exercise during a time of healing they recover and as they recover the muscles actually build up and they get stronger.

[ 10 : 06 ] You see without the testing without the pressure on your muscle there is no strengthening of your muscle. Well that's what's going on here in this account that we're reading in Genesis 22.

God is testing Abraham for the purpose of building and strengthening Abraham. So what is it that Abraham's test is all about?

well it all involves or it all revolves around his son. Look at verse 2. God said take your son your only son whom you love Isaac and go to the region of Moriah sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on the mountain that I will show you.

Now that must have crushed Abraham my son my only son my son that I love Isaac why would God command such a thing?

Well when we consider who Isaac is we can begin to see things a little more clearly. Isaac is not just Abraham son. Remember what we've been looking at.

[ 11 : 35 ] He is the son of the promise. God had promised to make Abraham into a nation that would become God's very own people and he promised that through that people would come a son who would bring salvation to the world.

So if Abraham is to sacrifice his son Isaac that means the promises that God has made have gone. They're dead. No more blessings.

So what's going on? Why would God tell Abraham to do such a thing? Everything from chapter 12 all the way up to now that 30 years have taken place have all been about the promise.

They've been waiting for years and years Abraham and Sarah to have a son and eventually the son, the promises arrived and now God comes along and says I'm going to take your son.

It's puzzling. It's perplexing. Why would God bring such testing? Well I think the big question in all of this is God is saying do you trust me?

[ 12 : 59 ] Will you have faith in me? You see we go through testing times don't we each one of us? And that doesn't mean to say God is going to come along and say to us sacrifice your child.

No scripture tells us that God is against all human sacrifice. In fact we'll see in a little while that God actually has no intention of killing Abraham's son.

But yet here the principle remains will you trust me in testing times? Even though you feel like your life is falling apart will you follow me?

Even though you can't see beyond tomorrow will you have faith in me? do we trust God when we don't understand what's going on or why it's happening and why I'm feeling the way I am?

You see times of testing will come and sometimes these times will not make any sense to us whatsoever.

[14:12] But in our testing will we say God is all I need He is enough He is sufficient Will you trust Him in your time of testing?

So first the test that faith experiences Second the confidence that faith brings the confidence that faith brings Now it's tempting for us as we read this story to imagine what Abraham must have been thinking when God said go sacrifice your son what would he have thought?

Did he have a conversation with Sarah about it? Well it seems the author doesn't want us to go there because the focus is not on what Abraham was thinking or any conversations he may or may not have had but on how Abraham responds.

God said sacrifice your son and verse 3 early the next morning Abraham got up loaded his donkey he took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac and when he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering he set out for the place God had told him about.

There it is go sacrifice your son there's no fuss it seems all quite simple Abraham goes about the day and prepares everything that needs to be done God speaks Abraham obeys obedience you see that's what faith is faith is spelt obedience it's listening to God who sees all things who knows all things who is sovereign over everything and doing what he says of course there are times we would like a little bit more information in our life if only God would show me what is going to happen into the future if only I could get a better picture and know what it's going to be like well then yes I'll step out in faith no faith is expressed in the little tiny steps of daily obedience we might not know everything that God is doing but God has given us his word and so we humbly obey it you see faith is not a feeling it's not something about well if it feels good to me if it seems right for me then I'll do it no it is obedience in action

[17:15] God speaks we listen and we obey that's what walking in faith is all about but still the question is there how does Abraham act with such confident faith well Abraham's confidence is not in himself his confidence rests and relies on the God who is faithful to his promises look how he responds first hear what he says to the servants let's pick it up in verse four on the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance he said to his servants you guys stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there we will worship and then we're going to come back to you now what a statement to make sacrificing your son is going to mean a death and yet

Abraham declares with confidence did you see it did you pick it up at the end of verse five we will worship and then what we will come back to you how could he say such a thing second listen to what he says to his son verse six Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering placed it on his son Isaac and he himself carried the fire and the knife but there's something missing isn't there and Isaac is onto it like a flash as the two of them went on together Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham father yes my son the fire and the wood are here but where's the lamb for the burnt offering Abraham answered God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering my son and the two of them went on together the sacrifice is

Isaac and it seems Abraham is ready to go with it he's come prepared the wood the fire the knife but yet he can still say with confidence God himself will provide the lamb now we mustn't think that Abraham is strutting about in pride be like me everyone just have more faith no this isn't arrogance this is humble confidence in a God who is faithful to his promise you see Abraham's faith is a reasoned faith his steps of obedience are founded on the strong foundation of what God had already said the author of Hebrews gives us an insight into how Abraham was thinking go with me to Hebrews chapter 11

Hebrews chapter 11 verse 17 and if you've got a page number please call it out there for me 1 2 1 0 1 2 1 0 Hebrews chapter 11 verse 17 so as we read this text it helps us to see what Abraham was thinking how he was processing his faith verse 17 by faith Abraham when God tested him offered Isaac as a sacrifice he he who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son even though

God had said to him it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from the dead you see Abraham went forward in obedience armed with the promises of God Abraham knew God to be faithful and he knew God was not going to break his promise it depended on the son of Abraham so he reasoned he calculated he thought about it and he stepped out in faith and he said even if my son is to be sacrificed even though my son will be killed God could raise him from the dead you see things had already happened in

[ 22 : 47 ] Abraham's life for him to think like this his wife Sarah was old and barren she had a dead womb but yet God put life into that dead womb and brought forth life and if he could do that in that incident well it's not too big of a jump to calculate that maybe God could bring someone to life and armed with that promise he stepped out in faith and what about you and me because don't we have a God who died through his son Jesus and who was raised from the dead and if he can say to you I have power over death itself will you not trust him look we're not Abraham I get that but we are like

Abraham in that we are to live and walk by faith faith that is rooted and founded on the shore and certain promises of God we don't need to know every detail of our life we don't need to work out our future or to try and have everything in our control we are to simply listen to God's word to read it and obey it our confidence is not in our faith but in the faithfulness of an almighty God who has power over death and who never fails so the confidence that faith gives third there's the provision that faith receives the test let's go back to Genesis chapter 22 the test is not over in fact the test is only just beginning the altar is prepared the wood is arranged

Isaac is bound the knife is raised what God commanded Abraham to do is actually taking place do you think Isaac struggled was there a fight between his father and the son what did Abraham say to eventually convince his son or did he just overpower him what was going on but once again the focus is on what we don't know but on what God did God provides verse 10 then he reached out his hand took the knife to slay his son but the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven Abraham Abraham here I am do not lay a hand on the boy do not do anything to him now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son your only son that's it Abraham round of applause everybody you've passed the test congratulations let's crack open the champagne you've done it in fact in honour of your great faith Abraham let's call this mountain Abraham the great no verse 14 Abraham called that place the Lord will provide and to this day it is said on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided you see Isaac may have been spared but only because God provided that's what we read in verse 13 isn't it Abraham looked up and there in the thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns he went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son just as

Abraham believed God would provide the lamb now don't worry about rams and lambs don't get caught up about wondering well he said a lamb now it's a ram no the point is God provided it's not about Abraham's demonstration of faith but God's provision in our need this is the kind of God that we have that in our testing times God will provide for all of our needs and concerns he will not forget you and he won't fail you but this story is much more than just a ram for Abraham this is a story that teaches us that we are in need of a substitute Christmas that people like you and I are also in need of a substitute and God is going to provide that for us.

[ 28 : 39 ] You see, if we are to know God's blessings of salvation, then we've got to live a faithful and obedient life. The problem is, so often we are unfaithful.

We are disobedient. We don't deserve the promises of blessing that God has. In fact, we deserve to die.

We deserve to be cut off from God forever. But God in his faithful love provides a substitute for us. You see, the account of Abraham and Isaac point us, don't they, forward to another father and his son who go together to another mountain.

As Abraham lifted up the knife to slay his son, Abraham hears that voice from heaven that says, Stop! Don't lay a hand on the boy.

[ 29 : 44 ] Look, I've provided a substitute to take its place. Yet as Jesus hangs on the cross, the Father's judgment falls, and there is no voice from heaven saying, Stop!

There's another substitute. Why? Because Jesus Christ is our substitute. He is the one who stands in for us. He is the one who is slain for us.

Jesus is the one who takes the judgment we deserve. He dies our death so that you and I might live. On the mount of crucifixion, God the Father sends his son, his one and only son, the son whom

he loves, Jesus, to die in our place so that we might be able to receive the blessing of salvation and the redemption of our lives.

You see, in our times of testing, we so often fail and fall. But God in his goodness has provided the perfect substitute that we need.

In a moment, we're going to remember back to the death of Jesus for us. And as we take and share in communion together, we look back, don't we, to the mount of crucifixion and we remember there that on the mountain, the Lord provided for us.

[ 31 : 25 ] It's not a celebration of our great faith, but the provision of God's great substitute. So the provision that faith receives.

And then to wrap up, the blessings that faith guarantees. God may have provided a substitute for Isaac, but that's not the end of the account.

God isn't done yet. He has more to give. There are more blessings to come. God confirms and guarantees his promise, doesn't he?

Look at verse 17. Speaking to Abraham, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

God is promising that a nation will come from him, a nation that will become God's special people. And they will take possession of the cities of their enemies.

[ 32 : 38 ] They will live in the promised land where there will be peace and rest. Verse 18, And through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed.

That through that family line would come the ultimate son who would bring salvation and redemption. Just as God had said to Abraham when he first called him, so God remains faithful to his promise.

The blessings flow like a mighty river, a fountain washing over. But why did the blessings come? Well, look at the end of verse 16. Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you.

In other words, end of verse 18, the blessings come because you have obeyed me. Faith obeys.

[ 33 : 48 ] Faith takes God as his word and it does what God says. You see, obedience does matter. Grace leads to obedience.

The evidence, the sign that we have received God's grace is an obedient life. It is through obedient faith that we experience the blessings of God.

Now as we reflect on these blessings, it reminds us that God continues to bless his people. That God graciously provides us with all things.

You see, like Abraham, as we walk by faith, we can be sure that God is for us. He's never going to let us down. He will bless us not just with salvation, but he will bless us with all that we need for all things in our life.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of that. Remember this verse in Romans 8, 32, speaking of God, He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

[ 35 : 14 ] He will graciously give us all things. If God did not withhold his Son, his only Son, whom he loves, Jesus, then he is not going to withhold anything that is right and best for you.

God in his love provided the greatest gift possible, a substitute for us, so that we could have life with him and he will continue to bless us and to provide us with all that we need as we follow him.

So as we go through our testing times, God calls us to walk in obedient faith. we may walk through dark times.

We may walk through fearful times. We can be confused and challenged and wonder what God is doing. We can be perplexed and stretched.

Yet through it all, God has promised to provide all that we need. The blessing will continue to flow.

[ 36 : 31 ] In all things, God will provide all that we need so that our faith is strengthened. Will you trust him?

He's good and he's kind. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord God, we confess that we are so small we do not see the bigger picture of all that you are doing.

But yet you have shown us great love. You have been faithful in providing Jesus Christ our sacrifice.

You have continued to bless us in ways that we never thought possible. Help us to walk by faith.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.