

The Lord will provide

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Date: 06 February 2019

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[0 : 00] Now return to the chapter that we read, the book of Genesis, chapter 22. Book of Genesis, chapter 22, reading at verse 14.

So Abraham called the name of that place, the Lord will provide. And this is a chapter of very high drama, looking at it from one point of view.

It begins with the call of God to Abraham in the twilight of his years, as God gives him the most severe test that he has to experience.

At the beginning we are told, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, Here I am. He said, Take your son, your only son Isaac whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah.

Offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, of which I shall tell you. Now try to put yourself in Abraham's shoes.

[1 : 27] How do you cope with such a demand? If it were you or me, would we be trying to negotiate with God?

But there is no indication of any room for negotiation in the demand that is addressed to Abraham.

It is a blunt, uncompromising demand that required obedience from this man Abraham.

Take your son, says God, your only son Isaac whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. Not Ishmael, who was a true son, but who was not the son of God's promise.

It wasn't even an Isaac about whom Abraham could be indifferent, if that is possible for a parent to be.

[2 : 33] It was your son, says God, your only son whom you love. It was that son that he was required to sacrifice.

So, although I say that it is a chapter of incredibly high drama, I think what is even more apparent is the level of obedience that shines through the verses of this chapter.

There is no indication that the matter was discussed with Sarah, his wife, or that she was even told, if anything, about this sudden three-day trip.

What we are told is that without delay, without any attempt to procrastinate, Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac, he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place which God had told him.

You get the impression that there was not much sleep, but that may be just my imagination. Maybe as one who trusted God, maybe he slept soundly, as one who entrusted his cares to the Lord.

[4 : 12] What is not in question is the impression created of perpetual movement from the time that he arose.

He rose early, the writer says. He saddled. He took two servants and a son. He cut wood and went.

It is a picture of constant activity on the part of this man. He acted in a manner consistent with his knowledge of God.

So you see faith at work in the very actions that are recorded for us by the writer at the outset of this chapter.

He believed God and he acted upon that belief. There is no record of any conversation in the chapter that took place throughout the three-day journey.

[5 : 20] Three days without speaking. Maybe they did speak, but were not told. Was the journey carried out in total silence? Was Abraham so lost in thought as he sought to come to terms with the apparent contradiction regarding the promise of his offspring being so numerous as the stars in the sky and on the other hand the sacrifice of Isaac before there was any offspring from Isaac.

The Holy Spirit has not seen fit to disclose to us what took place throughout the three days of travel with regard to any conversation or to the inner thoughts or emotions of Abraham.

You know, was Isaac more aware of more frequent attention from his father on that journey? Was he aware of more effusive love shown to him throughout the journey?

A veil of silence is, cloaks the journey. And it is only on the approach to the mountain, the land of Moriah that we are given the next snippet of information.

Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. I am the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.

[6 : 57] Now, when you read these words, you cannot but understand from these words but that Abraham expected to return with Isaac.

I am the boy will go over there and worship and you could insert and we will come again to you. Could you have been there and been in possession of the information that is given to us at the beginning of the chapter which reveals the purpose of the journey?

Would you have asked Abraham, how do you know that you both will return? Well, I don't know if Abraham then knew how this would come about.

But of this I am sure he believed this because it is written for us in the New Testament. He considered, says the writer to the Hebrews, that God was able even to raise him from the dead.

That seems to imply that he believed that after killing and offering Isaac as a burnt offering, God would raise him again. That also took faith.

[8 : 13] There had never been any resurrection before. He couldn't point to someone who had risen again from the dead. And doubt might say to Abraham, but that is ridiculous.

You've never heard of that before. No doubt. No doubt. But doubt would still persist in saying that.

You see, resurrection is compatible with the nature of God. But contradiction is not compatible with the nature of God.

And although there may have been an apparent contradiction between the demand that God is making of this man in offering up a son before there is any offspring, there is no contradiction in God.

It is not compatible with the nature of God. But resurrection is. So as these two, Abraham and Isaac, were traveling up this mountain, the son carrying the wood, the father, and were given these details, the fire and the knife.

[9 : 27] Just a note in passing. Everything that was not required for worship was left behind. So often when we come to worship, we take so much baggage with us, don't we?

By that I mean, I don't mean that we come literally laden with suitcases or bags, but we come with the cares of the day. We come with the cares of the workplace or from our homes, perhaps unprepared in thought.

Yes, we are physically in the place of worship, but our frame of mind so far from what it should be. And I think we all ought to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to leave behind the baggage when we seek the face of the Lord.

That we leave it at the bottom, as it were, of the mountain as Abraham did here. Now, I did say there is no evidence of conversation on the journey, but I do think that we can deduce, we can make this deduction, that part of the thought process of Isaac is made known to us.

For Isaac turns to his father and he says, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

[11 : 11] As if the writer wants us to understand that this young man, he wasn't just a little boy, this young man is wondering why on earth they are proceeding up to the top of this mountain with the fire and the wood and the knife, but that there is no animal for an offering.

And that would suggest that Isaac, at least, in his own mind, is questioning how they are to sacrifice given that they have no lamb to offer up.

And it is then we are given this marvelous response from Abraham. The marvelous response of faith in the life of this man, when he says, My son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.

What an astounding answer of faith. faith. And it's the response of scripture that echoes and re-echos down through all the Old Testament until the moment when John the Baptist in the New Testament era proclaims, Here God's lamb.

Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And so when this trial became more clear to his understanding and Abraham looked back on his trial, the one thought that rose in his mind was perhaps of how his meaning, his words became so true.

[13 : 11] So he named the place by a name. Not a name that spoke about his trial as you might expect. We're often inclined to do that.

But Abraham doesn't do that. He speaks about God and God's provision. Abraham called the name of the place the Lord will provide.

So often we feel we have to speak about me or my trial. But Abraham at this moment suffers from no such compunction.

He feels he is compelled to speak about God and what God did. Would that that were true in all of our lives so that rather than focusing upon our trials we would focus upon what God does.

And I'd like just to put three thoughts before you from our text. First of all reflections on the promise the Lord will provide. Secondly realization of the promise on finally reception of the promise.

[14 : 28] Reflections on the promise. The words the Lord will provide. They're possibly words that many perhaps many hear have used to encourage those of your fellow believers who may be struggling with their outward providence.

Sometimes it's used as a cliché and it perhaps the depth of meaning that is contained in these words are lost to sight.

But at other times we may have been so convicted of the truth of the promise that we have pleaded and wrestled in prayer to know and experience the provision of the Lord.

After all not only do we have this promise in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament where the Apostle Paul writing to the Philippians in that section of the letter where he speaks of God's provision and you remember what he says my God he says will supply every need of use according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus every need of use now it's easy enough to quote these words but do we actually believe what these words state perhaps I can give a couple of personal examples when I was a student in the late 60s I was at a time without any money my grant wouldn't be through for a couple of days there was no mobiles then as you know many telephones even we didn't have a telephone in our home back here in

Lewis and you wouldn't dare write home to your parents to tell them that you were penniless because they had enough worries without having to worry about a penniless student son it became a matter of prayer there was real and deep need and you see there are times I believe when real and deep need intensifies prayer in the lives of believers and it sometimes takes real and deep need to intensify the spirit of prayer in the life of the child of grace and do you know what I received a parcel in the post from an unknown source with goods and money sufficient to tide me over until I received my grant to this day I have no absolutely no idea who sent it because the parcel came anonymously but

[17 : 31] I had no difficulty in believing that whoever sent it was prompted by the Lord I could give you other examples of when we were doing renovations on church buildings and sky and there are several examples I could give where money was donated to the congregation at critical times in the funding of the congregation from unexpected sources to cover the costs just when most need it to me these were instances of the Lord's provision in providence they were answers to prayer so it is true that we may cast all our anxiety about all outward matters in providence on him in the assurance that the one who feeds the ravens will feed us and that if the lilies can flower into beauty without without care that we shall be considered by our father in heaven of more value than these well that's one reflection on the words the

Lord shall provide or will provide but there is a deeper meaning I believe in the provision that is spoken of here what was it that God provided for Abraham what is it that God provides for us if we are believers does he not provide for us a way in which to discharge the challenging difficult duties which are laid upon you as a believer and it may be that you feel you are totally and utterly inadequate to undertake these duties in fact the more you look at the duty the more impossible it seems to you that you can undertake the duty and yet when you have complied and yielded yourself in obedience and are ready to do what you were instructed there opens up before you a way provided by

God and you are empowered for the duty of that particular day you may have protested that you couldn't possibly do what you have been asked you doubted even with grace that you could possibly undertake what you have been asked but you see your hearts are set in obedience in response to the request and the demand that God makes on us the further we go on in the path of obedience the easier the command will appear and to try to do it is to ensure that God will help you to fulfill it that's the main provision that God makes there is nothing in this life that we need so much as to do the will of our father who is in heaven now yes the outward things are important and our outward providence is important but in order to experience the blessing of the

Lord it is to do his will as we live in this life and so when we get to the place where we feel that the duty is most difficult what is true you'll find our arm caught in the thicket by his horns in other words heaven itself will supply what is needful for you to fulfill the duty that is laid upon you and then there is one more thought here in these reflections I can't say with certainty that it was in the mind of Abraham but I can say that it was certainly in the mind of the writer of this passage Moses the

Lord will provide provide what he will provide not just you know providence not just provide a way to fulfill and undertake your duty but he will provide a substitute it's very likely in the view of most commentators at any rate that the mountain top which Abraham saw from afar and which he named Jehovah Jireh was the mountain top on which afterwards the temple was built at Jerusalem it was just a vacant mountain at this time there was no city there the temple and the altar have long since gone there is

[23 : 22] God made provision it's on this mountain that he provided the one which became the substitute for the life of Isaac and Isaac was preserved strange thing is we don't read of any flock from which this one was taken.

We don't read that any shepherd was searching for a one. What we are told is God provided the one.

And in many ways it is a dim foreshadowing of the great truth that the only sacrifice which God accepts for the world's sin, for your sin and my sin, is the sacrifice which he himself has provided. No other sacrifice will do. No other sacrifice can atone for your sins or mine but the sacrifice which comes through God's provision. And this I believe is the deepest meaning of all the sacrificial worship.

What was true of Israel is true of many nations. The world had built altars. Israel too by God's command had its own altar.

And all these express the need which none of these altars can ever satisfy. They show that man required a sacrifice.

[25 : 15] And what is taught here I believe is this that the sacrifice that is acceptable to God is provided solely by God on behalf of those whom he saves.

Abraham's devotion yes it was evident it was ratified he didn't withhold his son as only son from God and in his mind and in his heart he sacrificed Isaac.

God's love is authenticated because he has not withheld his only begotten son from us. So that this name that burst out as it were from the lips the grateful and astonished lips of Abraham contains a truth which holds true in all areas of our need.

On the lowest level it speaks of the supply of our providential needs. on a higher level it speaks of the way that God opens up in order to carry out our duties and a path through a cutrior and on the very highest plane of all the sparkless sacrifice which alone provides redemption for the world's sins.

These are the things I think which God provides. Jehovah Jireh as Professor R.A. Finlayson puts in his book speaking of the name of God Jehovah Jireh proclaims that God promises to provide what is needed.

[27 : 04] He pledges his faithfulness to meet the need. He links his sufficiency to us with our promise. promise. And the second point is the realization of the promise.

Note on the what conditions he provides. The incident and the name became the occasion of a proverb we are told as the writer tells us which survived at least down to the period of the writing of this book and probably long after.

when people were accustomed to say in the mount of the Lord it shall be provided will be provided or it will be seen.

Now the provision that we need has certain conditions as to the when and the where of the persons to whom this promise is fulfilled.

On the mount of the Lord it will be provided. if we wish to have our outward needs supplied our outward weaknesses strengthened power and energy sufficient for duty wisdom for perplexity a share in the sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world we see them all on the condition that we are found in the place where all God's provision is treasured.

[28 : 37] In other words when we come to trust in Christ and there is something else where this was realized Abraham is standing with a knife in his hand the next minute that God allowed him to proceed the knife will be read with the blood of the son whom he loves and it is only then that the call comes Abraham and he sees the one caught in the thicket there had been a long journey from their home they had this climb perhaps even a very anxious climb a glimmer of foreboding dawning on the much loved son and yet there was no indication of respite or of deliverance and you find these deliberate movements again on the part of Abraham he builds the altar no sign of divine intervention he meticulously places the wood on the altar and yet no indication of divine intervention he firmly and determinedly unsheathes the knife again a deliberate moment and there is still silence and you can say the tension is almost a breaking point he raises his arm and then

God intervenes and that is frequently God's way we're as it were driven as it were to the very edge before his hand is put out to help us it's not as if God is as it were toying with us but it is only then that deliverance comes remember the picture the psalmist paints on one occasion my foot slips he says as if he were just sliding on a slippery press in danger of going over the cliff to quote a phrase that is in vogue currently in the political world and then the help comes your steadfast love or your mercy oh Lord held me up to us it seems as if

God is unnecessarily delayed but you know if there is delay and I say that deliberately if there is delay may be how it appears from our side but remember God's clock is very different from ours there is no delay on his part but if there is delay it is the delay of love remember the message of the sisters worried concerned about their brother sent to the Lord and when he delays he does it for their good so that we might benefit from the experience of deliverance and he comes and it is never too late and that is how it is set before us here in the experience of Abraham but my time is going finally just a word the realization of the promise the reflections on the reception of the promise as I said at the outset he calls this by a name that reminds him not of his trial but of others of his trial but a name that proclaims

God's marvelous deliverance Abraham doesn't say anything about his agony his trial his obedience God spoke about these things but not Abraham it's as if Abraham didn't want any of these things to be remembered but what he wanted to hand on to other generations was what God had done for him and that is a lesson that we need to learn and relearn in our lives that what we hand on to the next generation is what God has done not what we may have passed through or what trials we might have experienced in our short lives but what God has done and when you look back on the past what do you see is the times of trial or times of deliverance when you look back on the mountaintops that have been in your life are they mountaintops that commemorate your sufferings or your trials or are they mountaintops that commemorate the blessings that you have experienced under the hand of

God because it seems to me that is what this man is doing here the Lord will provide says this man how do you know Abraham and Abraham's answer would be because the Lord did provide the Lord did provide now were we looking to our fellow men to help us out it would be a kind of shaky basis on which to be confident about receiving help but when you are looking to the resources of divinity then you can be confident with the confidence of faith that you are looking to one who has the resources to provide for all your needs for all your needs and so when you look back on your past life and you see these mountain peaks name them with your blessings and not with your trials in the knowledge that as you look forward into what is unknown and untried difficulties that may lie before every one of us the Lord will provide with the confidence of faith the Lord will provide and not surely a message that may be appropriate for you as a congregation in a time of vacancy look into the provision that comes from the

[36 : 20] Lord he will provide and it is to seek his provision and to be sure of it as you await the unfolding of his providence may you share the confidence of this man of God the Lord will provide reflections on the promise realization of the promise and reception of the promise let us pray always