

The Sacrifice of Isaac

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Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0:00] Good morning, Shoreline. Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 22, verses 1-19, our sermon text for today.

! If you need any Bibles, there are Bibles in the back. You can take one of those as your gift from us today. After these things, 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, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, of which I shall tell you.

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

On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to the young men, Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship, and come again to you.

[1:05] And 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 they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, My father.

And he said, Here I am, my son. 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 they went both of them together. When they came to the place which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar.

On top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son. 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 lay a hand on that boy, or do anything to him. For now I know you fear God, seeing you who have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

[2:08] And Abraham lifted his eyes, and looked, and beheld. Behind him was a ram caught in the thickets by its horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering, instead of his son Isaac.

So Abraham called the name of this place, the Lord will provide, as it is to this day. On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided. And 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, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand on the seashore.

And your offspring shall possess the gates of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all nations of the earth be blessed. Because you have obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went to Beersheba.

And Abraham lived in Beersheba. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Does that thing work?

Well, definitely going to go later than normal today. Hope you guys are okay with that. We have arrived at one of the most well-known stories in the book of Genesis, and in the Old Testament.

[3:31] Hopefully you are already familiar with the story, and if not, then you probably caught the sense, the tension even better than those of us that are familiar with it. God's command to Abraham perplexes us.

Abraham's faith astounds us. The story's suspense keeps us on the edge of our seats. The angel's perfectly timed intervention, and then God's provision and promises, they leave us speechless and

in awe.

And the foreshadowing of future events to come can hardly be more unmistakable. And with such a cherished and amazing story, I don't want to spend much time introing this thing.

So please, if you haven't already, turn in your Bibles to Genesis 22, 1 through 19. The title of today's sermon, not creative, The Sacrifice of Isaac. The Sacrifice of Isaac.

And the main point of today's sermon is this. God calls us to logic-defying, faith-filled obedience in response to His logic-defying, faithful provision.

[4:45] Now, all I want to do here in the beginning is simply explain what I mean and don't mean when I say logic-defying. First, what I don't mean. What I don't mean is that in order to believe the claims of Christianity, you need to check your brain at the door.

Far from it. And in fact, if you were here for our Genesis 1 sermon, we talked about, I invited you to engage your mind. When it comes to science and to history, we believe that the living God that we worship, the God of the Bible, is the God of history, is the God of science.

We can only know that gravity is 9.8 meters per second squared because He ordained and orchestrated a world that things are knowable and there are laws. We are not saying check your brain at the door. The claims of Christianity stand up to intense scrutiny.

They have for thousands of years. So what do I mean by logic-defying? Here's what I mean. Faith that defies worldly logic and worldly values. Because here's the thing.

Faith is indeed consistent with logic. Again, God made the human. God made the human mind. He made our minds rational, logical. Faith is consistent with logic.

[5:51] But there are many times when in our finite, fallen perspective, the call and the commands of God don't seem to align with my life circumstances.

They don't seem to make sense to us. And faith, in the face of that apparent misalignment, that apparent gap, faith clings to God's word and promises, even though I can't seem to reckon them with the particularities of my life.

But church, even this is founded on sound logic because it says, we say in those moments, I know that God is faithful. I know that his promises never fail.

And I know that Christ is worth it. So I hope you can see what I mean when I say, God calls us to logic-defying, faith-filled obedience in response to his logic-defying, faithful provision.

So let's see how this plays out in this story of stories, which we're going to look at in four sections.

And here's the first. Here's the first point. God tests the faith of his people. Simply put, God tests the faith of his people.

[7:00] Now, we saw this back in Genesis 12 and 13 and throughout. But here we come to a climactic moment in the Abraham story. Look at your Bibles.

Verse 1. After these things, 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 and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

Now, God's directive to Abraham is deeply perplexing. You should be perplexed that God is saying, offer up your son on the altar.

And Moses, all throughout the narrative, is doing different things to help us feel the internal tension that Abraham is feeling. Now, one of those things is this. God doesn't just say, take Isaac.

He says, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love. Now, this parallels the climactic revelation of Isaac's birth back in chapter 21.

[8:03] Chapter 21, verse 3, Moses said, Abraham called the name of his son, who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. It was just, the promise is fulfilled, but now we have, in a parallel sense, this climactic moment where God is calling him to offer, Abraham to offer that son.

Now, Abraham has just parted ways with his other son, Ishmael. And now God is calling him to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise, the son for whom he has waited 25 years.

25 years. Now, this might lead us to ask a question. What kind of God would ask a father to slaughter his son?

A lot of fathers in this room. Imagine being asked by God to slaughter your firstborn son. Is Yahweh, is Israel's covenant God, just like the pagan gods who demanded the horrific practice of child sacrifice?

Now, well-known atheist Richard Dawkins levels an attack against this story. He says, this is from his book, A God Delusion. He says, A modern moralist cannot help but wonder how a child could

ever recover from such psychological trauma.

[9:17] By the standards of modern morality, this disgraceful story is an example of child abuse, bullying, and the first recorded use of the Nuremberg defense. That is, I was only obeying orders.

That's the Nuremberg defense. Now, how do we respond to a critique like that from Richard Dawkins? There are a lot of things that we could say, not least of which is, what even is modern morality apart from the Bible?

Secularism has zero basis for morality. The existence of morals within an increasingly secular society is a sign, one, that there actually is a transcendent law that God has worked into the human conscience.

And second, it's a sign of Christianity's influence in Western culture in the first place. But besides that, the narrative itself gives us the answer key in the very first line.

This is really important. After these things, God tested Abraham. He tested him. James reminds us that God tempts no one, nor is he the author of evil.

[10:23] God is not tempting Abraham. He is testing his faith. And the outcome of the story reveals that God never intended for Abraham to slaughter Isaac in the first place, did he?

Well, then what's the purpose of God testing Abraham's faith? What's the purpose, you might ask? That is a great question. And the crazy thing is that Moses answers the very question later on in the Pentateuch.

Now, they're going to be on the screen. Moses gives us in Deuteronomy 8 four reasons why God tests his children. He's talking to the people of Israel. They've come through the wilderness. And he says the first thing is to humble you.

The second thing he... I encourage you to read Deuteronomy 8, but I'm just going to list these out. To humble you. Second, to reveal the state of their hearts. Third, to teach them reliance on God and his word.

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Moses is saying that's what God is teaching you in the wilderness. And fourth, to do them good in the end.

[11:21] That's why God tests the faith of his people. To do them good in the end. Brothers and sisters, disciples of Jesus, that maps directly onto the saints today in Jesus Christ.

God continues to test his children through the circumstances of our lives which he governs. James 1, 2 and 4. 2 through 4. Some of you have memorized this.

Count it all. Joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 1 Peter 1, 6 through 7. Peter says it in this, which he's talking about God guarding us and our inheritance until we come to glory.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, than what perishes when tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[12:34] I want to ask you this morning, what are you facing right now that seems really perplexing or challenging? What are you facing right now that reveals a gap between the promises of God on the one hand and the particularities of your life?

They don't seem to align. Maybe God is testing you. Perhaps God wants to use the difficulty to forge humility in your heart.

Maybe God is wanting to reveal the state of your heart and where it is right now. Maybe like gold in the flame, he wants to use it to burn away the impurities.

Maybe he's seeking to grow in you a truer trust. Without a doubt, if you are his, he is seeking to do you good.

And saints, listen, I know that the trials that we face are often the result of others' sin. Like we heard a testimony that involves that.

[13:52] Sometimes great sin. Maybe you've been falsely accused. Maybe you've been unjustly treated. Maybe you've been slandered or abused or oppressed.

And I am not up here saying, well, that's just God testing you. No. No. In God's family, we call evil evil and we lament injustice and we ask God to arise and defend the vulnerable.

We call sinners to repentance. We cry, come, Lord Jesus, come. Make all this new. Take away the sin and the evil.

And, and, not but, and, at the very same time, we know that God uses even evils against us for good in the end.

Do you believe that, saints, this morning? Do you believe that? God tests the faith of his people. Here's the second thing. Faith is proven through obedience. Faith is proven through obedience. Look at verse 3.

[14 : 54] So Abraham rose early in the morning. We've seen that phrase multiple times and it shows a prompt obedience on his part. He is ready to obey the Lord. That's why he said, here I am.

Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac and he cut the wood for their burnt offering and arose and went to the place at which God had told him. See, Abraham's obedience, as we say in our homes sometimes, is right away, all the way with a happy heart.

Right away, all the way with a happy heart. That's the kind of obedience that Abraham is demonstrating. Now this doesn't mean that he obeys easily. Now again, there is a tension in this story.

He's being offered to do something nearly impossible. It's a gruesome task. In fact, the order there of verse 3, Isaac's listed the last in the sentence.

It's sort of revealing this is the last thing he does is grab Isaac. And then in the next sentence, he cuts the wood needed for the sacrifice. Last step. This is sort of revealing the inner turmoil going on.

[15 : 56] Look at verse 4. On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey and I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.

Now first, three days. On the third day, Abraham has about a 50-mile journey from Beersheba to Moriah. Three days. That's a brutal amount of time for any three-day journey.

One where you have an awesomely difficult task at the end. That is brutal. He's every step that Abraham is taking, he is taking a step of faith and saying, I'm going to obey the Lord.

It's an act of surrender. And also, see his faith. He tells his servants, I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you. Abraham has no clue how God is going to do it, but he knows God's going to keep his promise.

God said, Through Isaac, shall your offspring be named. And you know, the author of Hebrews reckons based on the facts here that, Hebrews 11, 19, Abraham considered that God was able even to raise Isaac from the dead.

[17 : 05] Such was the greatness of Abraham's faith. Now that led him to this faith-filled obedience. And then, in the next few verses, and Abraham took, verse 6, he took the wood of the burnt offering, laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife.

So they went, both of them together. And Isaac said to Abraham, My father, and he said, Here I am, my son. He said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. So they went, both of them, together. Now here we see not only the resolute obedience of Abraham, but of Isaac as well.

Right? Moses brackets this interaction with, So they went, both of them, together. So we don't know how old Isaac is, but he's clearly old enough to carry a load of wood. He's perplexed by what's going on.

Does he realize that he himself is the sacrifice? The text isn't clear. But what is clear is that Isaac, he responds to Abraham's answer by going willingly.

[18 : 09] Right? He receives the answer and then he goes. And for Abraham's part, his reply to Isaac repeats his reply to God back in verse 1. He said to God, here I am. To Isaac, here I am, my son.

We're seeing the character of Abraham. He loves God. He loves his son. He shows this sort of eager response and miss to both. And then Abraham says, God will provide for himself the lamb. Now his intention is also, it's a little ambiguous.

Does he believe that God is going to provide a physical lamb in place of Isaac? Or is Abraham saying, Isaac, you're the lamb. We really don't know and maybe we're supposed to remain perplexed because Abraham's perplexed and Isaac is perplexed and we're supposed to feel this.

Yet Abraham is still, he's resolutely trusting and obeying God. So they continue, right? Father and son, step by step by step, they make their way up this mount, maybe in silence it seems to be. And then in verse 9 and 10, the camera moves in slow motion. I mean, this is storytelling at its best. Each frame is capturing another agonizing movement. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

[19 : 26] Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. And here the story reaches its climax. And that is reflective of the state of Abraham's faith.

Now we've seen Abraham at his worst moments, lying about Sarah to Pharaoh and then to Abimelech, sleeping with Sarah's servant Hagar to try to wrestle the promises into fulfillment. But here, here at this moment of suspense, he stands as this man of unflinching faith. And how do we know? Because faith is proven by obedience.

And Abraham obeys God all the way despite this apparent gap between what God promised and what he's commanded Abraham to do. Now this, this, brothers and sisters, this is the same logic-defying, faith-filled obedience that God is calling us to.

So I asked you earlier, what are you facing right now? What is perplexing or challenging to you right now where this, there seems to be this gap between what God has spoken and where you are at in your life circumstances right now?

[20 : 33] Or maybe what God is calling you to doesn't seem to make sense based on human logic. Now there are so many examples that I could give here. Now here's, here's one, here's one simple one. Maybe it seems like life is just way too busy to make time for the Lord.

He's clearly calling you to, but it doesn't seem to make sense to give up X, Y, Z to be able to make that time to be with the Lord.

And I want to ask, do you believe that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God? Do you believe that? Do you believe that?

Do you believe that you need spiritual bread every day? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is living water that satisfies your soul?

Do you believe that this morning? Do you believe that spending time being soul nourished in Him is worth accomplishing one fewer task today?

[21 : 43] Friends, faith is proven through obedience and sometimes it defies human logic. Here's another one. Husbands, 1 Peter 3, 7 says, live with your wives in an understanding way showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel since they are heirs with you of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered.

I didn't hear a conditional clause in there, did you? If your wife respects you, then. If she serves you in a way that meets your standard, then. Husbands, this is a high calling, but we are called to in faith-filled obedience to God, love our wives with outgoing, self-giving, sacrificial love, no matter how our wife treats us.

That's hard. That's what we're called to. And husbands, God is saying, this is the better path. This is the path of blessing. This is the path in which I will hear your prayers and in my human logic I say, nah, I think it's better for me if I prove I'm right right now.

That's the better path. I think it's better if I demand her service and then tell her how she's fallen short of that standard. I think it's better if I sit here scrolling on my phone while she tends to the needs of the house.

That's better. Husbands, faith is proven through logic to find faith-filled obedience. Now, wives, don't think you get off the hook because I could speak very similar words to you, but you're usually smarter than us, so I'm going to leave you to fill in the blanks.

[23 : 21] We could press this application into our lives as employees and coworkers, right? Faith in Jesus might look like risking reputation, risking promotion to obey the Lord.

I could talk to those here who maybe remain on the fringe of this church for various reasons when Christ is calling you, when we say it continually, to pour yourselves out for the upbuilding of the body.

Or maybe God is calling someone in this room to, like Brett's parents, like Harold and Christine Hall, forsake the comforts of American life and go into foreign missions.

If he is, come talk to me. Come talk to the elders. It's faith-filled obedience. But I want to press this into just one more specific application. This might feel a little close to home here.

It's a corporate application. In God's providence, we have been blessed to meet in the Holiday Inn for 11 years. Now, this has been an ideal rental situation, right?

[24 : 18] This has been a great space for us to use. It has served us well and we give glory to God for that. And if God wants us to continue to meet here, glory to God. This is a great space. But in God's providence, it may, I stress may, it may very well, he may very well be leading us to another space.

Maybe even 45 Broad Street, Second Congregational Church of New London. Now, we are actively seeking his wisdom and discernment. We're busy gathering data. We are engaging experts.

We're conversing with the city. We're receiving counsel. We're doing a lot of things. But brothers and sisters, we need to realize that God may be asking us to exercise faith. This move would no doubt feel uncomfortable in a variety of ways.

It would require sacrifice, time, energy, finances. We might even feel, we might even feel less safe at a different location. I do not want to make light of those things.

Okay? Those are real costs. But I want us, church, I want us, as a body, to think and to desire and to act like Christians and not like the world.

[25 : 31] We will continue to employ our God-given discernment. Okay? We will count the cost. We will seek to be wise stewards of what he's entrusted us with. But God help us not to be driven by worldly fears or worldly comforts.

God help us to move forward with faith-filled obedience to what he's calling us. Now, please hear me. I am not saying God is calling us to 45 Broad Street. I didn't say that.

I'm not saying that. There are steps that we need to take before we get there, not least of which is the whole church agreeing that that's what God is calling us to. I'm saying if he is calling us to 45 Broad Street, may we be willing to make the needed sacrifices acting in faith-filled obedience for the sake of Christ and the sake of the spread of the gospel.

And those are just a few examples, but how else might God be calling you to exercise this kind of logic-defying faith-filled obedience? For Abraham, it meant being willing to sacrifice his only son on the altar.

But right at the very moment that he reached out his hand and took the knife, look at verse 11. The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham! And he said, Here I am.

[26 : 49] He said, Do not lay your hands on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me. Now, here's the third point.

God's faithful provision precedes, comes before, and succeeds, comes after, our faith-filled obedience. God's faithful provision precedes and succeeds our faith-filled obedience.

At just the right time, God intervenes. He stops Abraham from slaughtering his son. The angel says, For now I know that you fear God.

God, of course, already knew what was in Abraham's heart, but James says, Abraham's faith was completed by his works. And following this, if we keep going, Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.

And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day, on the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.

[27 : 58] Now we've seen that phrase. He lifted up his eyes and looked and behold. We've seen it multiple times. And each time, it highlights what Abraham is receiving from the Lord.

In chapter 13, it was the promised land laid out before him. In chapter 18, it was God coming to him in human form to fellowship with him. Now it's this merciful, timely provision of a substitute ram to take Isaac's place on the altar.

And so Abraham, he fittingly names the place. It's not Abraham obeyed. It's Yahweh-Jaira. The Lord will provide. The Lord will provide. That, and that continued.

Moses tells us that it continued to be reflected. Actually, it's probably a later author saying, hey, this is what, this is how this mount is still referred to. On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided or it shall be seen.

Certainly God has revealed himself in this timely provision so maybe that double meaning is intended. And it's that message, again, not Abraham's faith-filled obedience, the message that would memorialize that place is God's gracious provision.

[29:11] Now we're rightly inspired by Abraham's faith-filled obedience but the more amazing reality still has to do with the God in whom he believed, the God that he obeyed, the God who showed up at just the right time to provide exactly what was needed.

Now but notice how I worded this point. I said, God's provision precedes and succeeds our faith-filled obedience. In this story, it clearly comes after Abraham's obedience.

Why do I say it precedes it? Why do I say it comes before? I have two reasons I want to give.

Here's the first one. Because of the context of this story in Genesis. This is not an isolated story.

Abraham has not always been the model of faith-filled obedience, has he? I already gave the examples before. And in fact, where did God find Abraham when God originally called him Genesis 12?

In a pagan household, worshiping and serving other gods. Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. God chose Abraham not because of anything in Abraham, but because of his divine grace.

[30:21] And we've said that over and over again. And God chose Noah not because of anything in Noah, but because of God's divine grace. God graciously revealed himself to Abraham and he awakened in him a faith which God counted to him, Genesis 15, 6, as righteousness.

So God's provision clearly precedes Abraham's obedience. But there's a second reason. And it doesn't have to do with this story's context in Genesis, but it's connections to the rest of Scripture.

Now I want to ask a Bible trivia question. If Phil means here, he knows. Is Phil me here? Do you know what was later built on the top of this mount, Mount Moriah? Anybody?

The temple. Wow, nice. You guys were reading. We're just, yeah. 2 Chronicles 3, verse 1. Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah.

Mount Moriah is the site where the temple would later be built. What is the temple? The temple is a place where Israel would meet with her God. The temple is a place where Israel would offer up blood sacrifices to atone for her sins so that she could meet with her God.

[31:39] But here in Genesis 22, God provides a substitute sacrifice to take Isaac's place. Now under the Mosaic law, this animal sacrifice would become God's appointed means, right, for the sins of the people to be forgiven so that they could approach God, fellowship with God, receive the blessings of the covenant.

But Christians know that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins, Hebrews 10.4.

Right? The Jewish sacrificial system, it was a copy, a shadow of the reality.

What is that reality? What is the real thing? It's Christ. It's what we were singing about before. His once-for-all atoning sacrifice.

He offered himself up on Calvary's mount just outside Jerusalem where the temple was. For on the mount of the Lord it shall be provided. You see, Abraham's faith and obedience waffled and wavered, and we saw this over and over again.

But Christ, though he was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Even in the face of the greatest trial imaginable, he said, not my will, but yours be done.

[32:52] And he was made perfect through suffering. Jesus is the greater Abraham. Jesus is the greater Abraham. Kids, that's not on your sheet, but that's a good thing to write down.

Jesus is the greater Abraham, and not only the greater Abraham. Jesus is the greater Isaac. The greater Isaac. Like Isaac, Jesus bore on his back the wood on which he would be bound, the cross. Like Isaac, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opens not his mouth, Isaiah 53, 7. Like Isaac, Jesus entrusted himself to his father, doing exactly what his father required.

Unlike Isaac, there was no timely provision for Jesus because Jesus was the timely provision. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, John 1, 29.

You see, Isaac deserved to be on the altar. Abraham deserved to be on the altar. You and I deserve to be on that altar because of our sins that has offended the holy God.

[34:01] But just at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly, Romans 5, 6, so that we could be forgiven of our sin, declared righteous by faith, and experience everlasting joy and fellowship with God, the reason he made us, Genesis 1 and 2.

And friends, this provision, this is a logic-defying, merciful, faithful provision on God's part. And that precedes our obedience to him.

That comes before. And listen, even for Abraham, in the eternity of God, God foresaw the death of his son, Jesus Christ, on the cross for Abraham's sins, for Isaac's sins.

That was an act decided upon in eternity past. That preceded Abraham's obedience, even Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Not in human time, but in the mind of God.

God. The gospel is so clear that our works contribute nothing to salvation. We don't cooperate with God in salvation by doing good deeds.

[35 : 07] Good works are the outworking of a reborn life. Well, how do I get reborn? By the word and the spirit. He remakes us, gives us new life. And then he calls us to faith-filled obedience.

So if you're here this morning and you've never looked to Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice, as the only basis for your salvation, I urge you today to look to him.

Look to Christ. Friends, the Bible is so clear. And we've seen the flood story. We've seen the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And we've seen the clarity the Bible gives that we have an incurable disease called sin.

But in God's boundless mercy, he has offered up his only son, his beloved son, Jesus Christ, to himself become the provision to cure our souls of that sickness.

Make Christ, friends, make Christ your provision today. And saints, may we remember, brothers and sisters, may we remember that our faith-filled obedience to Christ was preceded by his ultimate sacrifice.

[36 : 13] He has already paid the highest price for our redemption. What sacrifice could we not then make for his sake? What sacrifice is too high?

He gave us everything. And whatever sacrifice we make in this life will be succeeded by an everlasting outpouring of the riches of God's grace.

And that really leads us right into the final point for today. Look first at verses 15 through 18. And 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 and have not withheld your son, your only son.

I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of the heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore and your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.

Fourth and final point, covenant promises of God are as sure and unchanging as the God who swears to them. God already ratified the covenant.

[37 : 20] If you were here in Genesis, he ratified the covenant back in chapter 15. You remember that ancient covenant swearing ceremony where God passed between the animal halves? That's God saying, I'm taking the burden on me.

Right? But now he swears to the covenant. Right? As if that covenant ceremony was not enough. He swears to the covenant. Now if you remember last week, Abraham entered into a covenant with someone else, right? First, Abimelech and Abraham, they swore this oath and then it proved very unreliable.

Suddenly covenanted together with, and Moses wants us to see, God is a far more reliable oath taker and covenant partner than Abimelech or than anyone else.

Right? Abraham and Israel and God's people in every generation. We cannot rely on the word of fickle men. We can absolutely rely on the word of the life-giving, promise-keeping God.

And you know, the best commentary on these verses is actually straight out of Hebrews 6. So it's going to be on the screen. Hebrews 6. For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, right?

[38 : 29] We swear on my mother's grave. Like you point to something greater than yourself. God had no one greater by whom to swear. So, he swore by himself, saying, Surely I will bless you and multiply you.

And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. Here it is. For people swear by something greater than themselves. And in all their disputes, an oath is final for confirmation. So, here's the point.

When God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

The two unchangeable things, what are those? It's God's promise and it's God's oath. His promises would have been good enough. After all, the grass withers and the flowers fade.

The word of our God stands forever. And yet on top of it, he swore an oath. And Hebrews is saying that in light of that, the saints have every reason to hold fast the hope set before us.

[39:40] But the author of Hebrews continues. Verse 19, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

You see, church, we have something greater than Abraham had. We have the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have all the Abrahamic promises fulfilled to an even greater degree.

Now if you look back, Jeff, if you go back or go forward one, if you go forward one and we look at those promises, look at this. I will surely bless you. Are we not all the more blessed now in Christ through the gospel?

Abraham's offspring, they have multiplied as the dust of the earth and the stars of the heavens and the sand on the seashore through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And they continue to multiply every single day as the lost are being saved.

Christ, the promised offspring. This was an addition here we haven't seen yet. Your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies. That's like Genesis 3:15. Christ is the promised offspring.

[40:55] He has trampled down the gate of his enemy, Satan. And now he's leading the church militant, the church triumphant to storm the gates of hell. Christ will build his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against us.

And friends, look at that last promise there. In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Is that not happening right now through the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The nations, we are the nations, we're part of that, are hearing the word of the gospel and coming to faith in Jesus and becoming children of Abraham by faith in Christ.

Saints, God calls us to logic-defying, faith-filled obedience. This is not a blind faith. This is not a robotic compliance.

This is not, well, this just seems to work for me. This is the proper response of a heart and a life to the logic-defying, faithful provision of God and Christ.

[41:56] And, Romans 8, 32, he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things, his own son and all things?

That seems worth whatever small sacrifice by comparison I might make in this life. Does it not, saints? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you are such a gracious God.

You are a merciful God. You have provided us your very Son who has become the Lamb who was slain to take away our sins.

God, there could have been no greater gift, no greater provision. Lord, I pray that we would see Christ every single day and be reminded of the treasure that we have.

He is the pearl of greatest price, worth selling all for. God, would you help us not to offer up obedience begrudgingly as if it's some great sacrifice on our part but to see the greater sacrifice that you made and with joy right away, all the way with a happy heart to obey you in faith.

[43:15] You've given us the greatest thing. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.