

Genesis 22 "The Lord Will Provide"

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Date: 29 July 2018

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

That's a powerful clip to me. Sorry, that song earlier, I'll tell you about it. I'll get into that in the sermon, but I'm Derek Harris, because I haven't met you.

I'm one of the pastors here, and I'm very happy to preach the Word of God this morning. That video, I hope, resonates with you the way it does with me, because you can feel his pain.

I feel it when I see his face, and we all know what it's like to be in a situation, don't we, where it's so hopeful, and then it suddenly turns out to be something so broken, right?

We all long for a hero to make things right, to rush out of the stands, right, and carry us. Someone who will turn the bad things into good things. Someone who will save us from our distresses, our loneliness, and our fear, and who will protect us forever.

[1 : 08] And we look to that hero in so many things that aren't that hero, right? We look for our spouses to be that hero, our image, our work, our money, our reputation.

And underneath all of that, we're really just longing for a hero who understands our pain, our fear, and has the power to actually change our world and our distressing circumstances.

We want someone to walk across that ultimate finish line with us the way that dad did, and not merely a hero who just makes things better or is a rainbow in our pain, but one who can completely erase all pain, all death, and all suffering forever.

We want that ending that says he or she lived happily ever after, and we look for it in so many things. Well, in our passage today, Father Abraham was also longing for that hero.

He was also longing for an escape from those circumstances. And he trusted a God who would deliver him from the horrific circumstances that just seemed like they would drag on and drag on.

[2 : 15] So let's look at these verses together from Genesis chapter 22. After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, 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, 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 he saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and he 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.

[3 : 19] And he said, Here I am, my son. He said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where's 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. And when they came to the place of which God had told them, Abraham built the altar there, and he laid the wood in order. And he bound Isaac, his son, and laid on him the altar, 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 your hand 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.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and he 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.

[4 : 19] So Abraham called the name of that place, the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day on the mountain 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 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.

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

So this verse is very chilling, right? It's these verses. This is a story that we're all very familiar with, but when we look at it very closely, it's a striking story.

We have Abraham, the father, the patriarch formerly known as Abram, the promised father of all nations. He and his wife Sarah have been waiting for a son because Abraham and God had talked about it.

[5 : 37] If we look at Genesis 15 here, Behold, you've given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir.

Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside, and he said, look toward heaven and the number of the stars, if you're able to number them. Then he said to him, so shall your offspring be.

And he believed the Lord, and it was counted to him as righteousness. So they have this conversation, right? And then Abraham and Sarah wait and wait, and they trust and they trust, and they grow older, and they grow older, tick, tock, tick, tock.

And after 10 years of waiting, Abraham gets antsy. And he decides to make other arrangements for the child and take matters into his own hands. So he decides, well, God must have meant that I need to have a child with my servant Hagar.

I'll take it from here, God. And the child was named Ishmael. Now, imagine how tough this was for his wife Sarah to see this happen. Imagine the despair in her heart.

[6 : 44] And Abraham thought that this would be his heir. He had taken care of this promise that God made. He trusted, but he also tweaked. He tweaked God's plan. He thought this was the promised child who would grow into the nations as numerous as the stars.

But God had one plan all along. And he didn't need Abraham to tweak his plan. And he doesn't need us to tweak his plan either.

So after more waiting and more years, God provides a child. 15 years after Ishmael was born, 25 years after that initial conversation that Abraham had with God about him giving him a child, God had planned for Sarah to bear a son at the youthful age of 90.

And Abraham was to be the 100-year-old dad. That's why Sarah laughed when Isaac was born because the name Isaac means laughter. This son, though, would be the heir.

This son, Isaac, would be the seed of the nations. His name that meant laughter. And it's through Isaac that Abraham would become a blessing to all the families of the earth, including us here today.

[7 : 54] But right before this passage in Genesis 21, Ishmael has been sent away with Hagar. And God promises to take care of him and to make him into a great nation as well.

But Abraham, he decided to push the reset button and to go back and say, this is the family. I've messed up in some ways. And push reset.

And he started over. And he's left with Sarah and Isaac, his only son. So the world around us drastically influences how we understand our reality.

And if we read this passage here from only our perspective, we might miss the greater message. When I say our perspective, I mean American perspective. We might get derailed from the very beginning of this passage because our passage begins with a request.

A request from God the Father to Father Abraham that some have called maniacal, cruel, and downright disgusting. So if we look at verses 1 and 2, we see the request.

[8 : 59] Take your son, your only son, 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 the first thing that we have to consider before moving forward is the nature of this request.

This is where I found perspective outside of an American perspective to be helpful. And that particularly the perspective of how an Israelite would have heard this. An Israelite would not have understood this request as maniacal or cruel or disgusting.

They wouldn't have heard this as an account of God tempting Abraham to do something he shouldn't and to sin. It's not an account of Satan tempting Abraham. This was actually all about God and they would have known that.

All of it. God here is testing one of his beloved servants, one of his prophets, so to speak, of which Abraham was a type to come, the prophets to come later, were often, they were often tested though with the most extreme circumstances.

It was a part of the plight in their life. And their life was a difficult one. And if what they said wasn't true, their life was actually taken from them as a penalty. So the Israelites would have actually understood this when hearing the gospel story.

[10 : 15] So the request wouldn't have seemed as odd as it may seem to us and our modern American minds today. If you think about it, I've got a picture here to put up here.

The passage begins by giving us the motive here. And we hear that the request is a test. So when soldiers prepare for battle, they must pass tests, right?

They must role play in the preparation for the role that they're going to play in the future. They've got to jump out of planes, shoot guns many times, risk their life. But their instructors are always preparing them for battle.

And certainly and always, the well-being of the soldier is of utmost importance. The instructor's done this before and knows how to best prepare the soldier that he cares for for what is ahead.

But the greater the responsibility of the soldier, the more extreme the test is going to be for the soldier. So here we have Abraham and God's request for him to complete a test, to sacrifice his son, the son of blessing.

[11 : 19] And if you remember how tough this must have been, God had originally asked Abraham to leave everything, take everything he had, and go to Ur. So God had asked him to sacrifice his past and all that he had.

And now he's looking to Isaac to be this blessing, to continue to become the nation of Israel, and God's asking him to sacrifice his promised future. So how could a good God ask for something like this?

Like the death of a child to somebody that he loves? That doesn't seem very good at all. It doesn't feel good. Does this mean that God is not good?

You know, as I read this passage, I had to struggle with this question again. And I think many of you probably have struggled with this question in your heart before. To me, it brought up feelings of grief in my heart.

I had to wrestle with whether or not I would be able to do what Abraham did. And to this day, I really don't think that I would. Which is why I'm so glad that my faith doesn't rest on my obedience.

[12 : 24] But on the perfect obedience and provision of someone else. God himself. Through Jesus Christ. So, it made me think back to times in my life when I actually was challenged with the question, God, are you good?

Because it feels so bad. And I've not really shared this much ever from the pulpit. But I remember the morning that I watched my wife on the phone as she received the news that her 23-year-old brother had taken his life.

That moment changed both of our lives forever. It was followed by a few years later by the death of her mother to cancer.

A time in our life when it literally felt like God had shaved off all of our skin and dropped us in a pool of rubbing alcohol. Pain, suffering, looking for light and escape.

Yet, I believe in God. I trusted Him. Many of you may have experienced something like this in your life or another type of tragedy that changes you forever from that point forward.

[13 : 31] And it may have made you ask, is God good just when you think you're going to win that race? Right? Your moment of joy enters this brokenness. Dan Allender calls this, he's an author, calls this, the shalom shattered, the peace completely broken of the fabric that you know.

And I won't act like I have all the answers, but I have found rest in this. Though God, the creator of life as we know it, has the authority to give life and the authority to take it away, to create good circumstances and to eradicate bad ones, and though He has full authority to make this sort of request that He makes to Abraham, He's also the one who sustains those who are left with any loss or pain.

He left the stands of heaven to bring us home. And though we experience horrific loss, my family and I, that I honestly would undo, I believe, if God said, you can snap your fingers and undo this, I would say, okay, my wife and I have become closer through all of this.

God's brought us closer to Him through all of this, and He's done it through His people, the church. church. So it's the same God who promises that I will be with my loved ones in heaven forever.

So He allowed this to happen, but He sustained me in the midst of it happening. And my loved ones will be there because they had faith in the God who provides, Jesus Christ. Heaven is real, and when I'm there, this loss will no longer exist.

[15 : 03] And if you have faith in Jesus, it won't exist for you either. So that gives me reason to hope in the midst of dark circumstances. And I hope that it gives you reason to hope. I don't think you're here by accident today to hear this story.

When you find that shalom shattered, remember, it's going to be restored. The shalom will be restored and it will be never-ending peace. Therefore, it gives me faith and it gives me assurance of the things hoped for, and that's how we keep walking.

And that's why we need each other. And in this passage, you see that hope, you see that determination in Abraham. You see trust and you see life. The request is a test but what is his response?

His response is remarkable. Absolutely remarkable. I'm not going to read all this verse but I'll refer to it. So when I took Hebrew in seminary, one of our assignments was to translate this chapter, Genesis 22, and it stuck with me.

When reading it in the original language, there is a tone about commitment and determination and absolute heartache all on the foundation of unrelenting trust in God despite the seemingly horrific situation.

[16:11] There's something about it you capture when you read it in the original language. The faith of Abraham, though, it's astonishing. You see it in his response here. Even though all the circumstances seem completely horrific, go sacrifice your son.

I mean, I don't know of a worse request. He knew the true character of God and he knew the burden that he carried as Father Abraham. And part of me wonders if he even thought, well, maybe this is happening as a punishment because of the decision I made to tweak God's plan and have a child with Hagar.

I wonder if he blamed himself ever about that. Have you ever thought that way? Like, something bad happens to you because you've offended God in some way, even though you completely don't believe that's what happens when you accept Christ?

But God doesn't work that way. He promises love and blessing and protection for everyone who trusts him through faith. That doesn't mean that bad things will not happen to us.

It means that bad things are a part of the story but that the ending is greater than we can possibly imagine. Notice in verse 3, Abraham doesn't argue.

[17:19] He just gets up and goes, at least in this account. He rose early in the morning. I bet he rose early in the morning. I bet he didn't sleep the night before. Would you? You know, he rested in the restlessness.

You ever done that where your mind just races all night? There's no mention of him telling Sarah what was going on, what was going to happen, but there's a tone of that determined, focused silence, almost like a state of mourning.

So he saddles the horse. He gets two of his men to go with him. He gets the wood for the burnt offering and then he and Isaac set out for the mountain. Mount Moriah is what it was. The journey took three days and then at the base of the mountain, he asked his men to wait.

I don't think they knew what was happening. And the only person that actually knew the whole story from beginning to end at that point would have been God the Father. And the only person who knew about the nature of the request at this point would have been Abraham.

So those two, the only ones who knew the big picture there. Verse five, you can see the faith and the trust of Abraham. Notice he says to his two workers, stay here with the donkey.

[18:23] I and the boy will go over there to worship and come again to you. See, he expected to walk out with Isaac. Yet, he was willing to fulfill the request to the end. We know this because of Hebrews 11.

Let's look at that together. And Isaac, wait, go to Hebrews 11, please. Thank you. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.

And he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son of whom it was said, through Isaac shall your offspring be named. He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

So, Abraham had a resurrection faith. That's what we can learn going into this, going into this request. And he trusted God and he knew that even if he had to go the fullest degree with this request, he expected that God would bring his child back to life.

So, are we learning be good and have faith like Abraham? Never question or doubt? Never wonder? No. That's not what, if that's what this passage teaches us, it's an element of it, have faith.

[19 : 31] But if that's all that we see, we're missing the point of this passage. It's not intended to be a lesson of do better. But we do gain a little bit more insight between a relationship between faith and works, I think.

We can look at that here through Abraham's response. See, we believe that we're saved by faith alone, through Christ alone, in Christ alone. What we're taught in James 2, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

You see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works and the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And what this means is this, our faith in Christ justifies us before God.

Our works, in the case of the word justify in that passage, meaning demonstrates our faith before men. So, Abraham was fully faithful and God knew his heart.

[20 : 34] God didn't need him to show him. Okay? But other people don't know his faith and God certainly knew his heart, as I said, but who needed to see his faith?

We did. Today. And Abraham needed to see the faithfulness of his God, our God. And we need to see each other's faith. And we need to see and hear how God has sustained you and me and provided.

That's why he's given us the church. One of the many reasons that's why he's given us his word. And when we live out our faith through our lives, we tell a much larger story of gospel redemption.

We extend the comfort that God has given us to those around us by reminding them that they're not alone. And when we let others, especially in our church community, know us, really know us, the hard parts and our stories, our brokenness, we can receive God's comfort through them.

God is faithful to provide what you need when you need it. And as the story continues in Genesis 22, verse 7, Abraham gives the wood to Isaac to carry.

[21 : 44] He takes the knife and the flint. As they're traveling, we read one of the most sobering verses in the Bible, I think. When we hear Isaac ask his dad, my father, and he said, here I am, my son.

Behold the fire and the wood, but where's the lamb? I don't even have a category in my mind for that conversation. And I cannot imagine what was going through the mind of either one of them.

As the narrative continues, they reach the place for sacrifice. And Abraham's faithful to the instructions. He binds his son, he lifts up his arm to fulfill his sacrificial duties.

And then, our hero, the trustworthy God, the one who will provide for you and me and has provided. What happens?

The one who gives life and love, he rushes from the stance and he speaks through his angel from the sky and resurrection light enters our dark scene of brokenness.

[22 : 49] You see this, the resurrection is real. And if we are not talking about the resurrection or understanding it, why do we have faith at all? It's what Jesus came to save us from, the resurrection of the dead to death.

He saves us a resurrection to life. This is what the gospel is all about. What an amazing true story we see here. Verse 13, you can see God provides a ram caught in a thicket of thorns by its horns.

The ram is provided as a substitute for his son. Abraham's faith then is ratified and it's credited to him as righteousness. The mountain is named Jehovah-Jireh, which means the Lord will provide.

Verse 15, you see God reestablishes his covenant from Genesis 15 where he says that he will bless you with descendants more numerous than the stars.

Well, he takes it even further and he says they're going to be more numerous than the sand on the seashore. And as the words of that song that owned me at the beginning say, sometimes I think of Abraham, how one star he saw had been lit for me.

[24 : 03] He was a stranger in this land and I am that no less than he and on this road to righteousness sometimes the climb can be so steep I may falter in my steps but never beyond your reach.

God, you are my God. during the loss of our brother and our mother we would go to the beach sometimes down there on 30A if you've ever been there and there's this beautiful sand dune lake and I would just walk and just listen to that song and just step.

So all I had to do was just keep walking and I don't know where you are and what you may be going through just keep walking and keep looking up at those stars and remembering that one of those stars is lit for you.

Abraham had a resurrection faith and he trusted God but what does that really mean? It doesn't mean just be good. The meaning of the passage is this the Lord provides a lamb for a burnt offering so that Isaac who becomes Israel may live so that we may live.

If you read Matthew 1 verse 1 we learn that from all of this came Jesus Christ the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David the son of Abraham and it goes into great detail.

[25 : 30] The Lord provides a lamb for a burnt offering so that Isaac so that Israel may live so that we may live. The ram you see is a type of Christ the lamb who was slain for his people are you one of his people?

This is not a story about being good it's not a story about doing better it's not a story about a distant God who doesn't understand this is about Jehovah Jireh the God who provides a sacrifice for his chosen people who does not spare his son as he did for Isaac but a loving father who gives his only son to die in our place as a substitute on the cross made of wood so that we may live for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life Abraham looked ahead to the Christ who would save the world God would provide God did provide God is still providing today we receive that eternal life through faith in Jesus' perfect life atoning death and glorious resurrection Jesus is that ram caught in the thicket of thorns to be sacrificed for us in our place on a cross on a cross made of wood wearing a crown made of thorns on his head and as Abraham and Isaac journeyed to Mount Moriah this is amazing is on that same mountain over a thousand years later that our lamb our Lord Jesus Christ would be sacrificed as Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice so our Lord would carry the cross to the place of his sacrifice on our behalf for those three days on the journey

Father Abraham mourned but through his resurrection faith Isaac's life was spared and in that sense he was raised to life off of the sacrificial altar three days after Jesus Christ bled to death for us on the cross made of wood with the crown of thorns on his head he was raised to life and he promises that those who look to him in resurrection faith will have their lives spared in eternity because his was not spared on earth but on the third day he rose again from the dead and he promises that if we believe in him we will not face death in eternity but we will receive life forever what then shall we say to these things as we said earlier if God is for us who can be against us in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us I'm sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord the Lord provides a lamb for a burnt offering so that Isaac may live so that Israel may exist so that Jesus Christ may be provided and may be sacrificed for us so that we may live the ram's a type of Christ who was slain for God's people the lamb who was slain are you one of his people because you can be through faith you can be adopted into his family as sons and daughters of God

I was talking with a child this morning who just put their faith in Christ and we talked about this you're in the family now you're adopted as a child of God see what kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God but what's the ending of the story of those who are adopted into God's family through faith in Christ what's the finish line that he carries us across it's nothing less than victory over death let's read the end of our story then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away and he who was seated on the throne said behold

I'm making all things new also he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true and he said to me it is done I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end to the thirsty I will give from the spring of water of life without payment and the one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be his God and he will be my son are you here today stuck in the struggle to trust God this is the beautiful promise for you are you here questioning whether you're ready to take that step to put your faith in Christ for maybe the first time or maybe recommitment maybe you've lost your way this is the beautiful promise for you Jesus is the truth that will set you free God has provided for you remember this provision through faith in Christ you will be equipped whatever you're called to whatever test you're called to you're equipped as his saint to do the work of ministry this means sharing your story letting yourself be known to him and trusted others holding his hand renovating this world one relationship at a time until he walks you across the ultimate finish line when he returns for you and makes it all brand new forever that day when our hero our dad takes us home and we live happily ever after let's pray

[31 : 26] Father in heaven may you be glorified magnified and receive praise thank you for providing the sacrifice of your son for us when we don't deserve it Lord Jesus thank you so much Father for the truth of the resurrection may we never forget its reality every time we take the Lord's Supper may we remember for the reality of you being raised to life sitting on the throne of grace where we may receive mercy and help in our time of need and I pray that anyone in this congregation here today that's hurting they would find their need in you they would find the balm for their soul Lord Jesus and that they would run to you they would experience your grace and that the people in this congregation here would envelop them with love and that that love would envelop this community Father and this world thank you for the truth of scripture thank you for providing and it's in Jesus name we pray Amen For more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host) we hope to find out next week ■■■■ to the first reveille

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