

"The Lord Will Provide"

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- [0 : 00] Brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you. And this morning, we'll be looking at an ancient word for a new year.
- And the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Let me ask that God will provide for us as we turn to his word together.
- Father in heaven, Lord, you are the great provider. God, give ears to the deaf and eyes to the blind to see spiritual realities.
- Lord, we pray that you would provide salvation for those who are far from you. Lord, provide trust. Provide endurance for those suffering, trials.
- Provide us with a sense of the glory of your son and of you, Father. And provide for me. Help me, Lord, to proclaim your great name.
- [1 : 08] To proclaim your wondrous works. In Jesus' name, we pray these things. Amen. Amen. Well, I hope you had a good Christmas.
- I love Christmas. Let me tell you something I hate. Tests. I hate tests.
- There are far too many of them. Fitness tests. Personality tests. Licensure tests. Standardized tests. In my vocation, I am an attorney.
- And there's one thing that unites all attorneys. The dreaded bar exam. It's a challenging test as you carry around an 800-pound bag of law on your shoulders.
- And now law students love to complain. The bar examiners are barbarians, they'll say. This is all a hazing ritual. During the test, you might hear collective gasps as they discover some esoteric rule of law is being tested.
- [2 : 19] Topics that must have been created by diabolical law professors to inflict punishment on the unsuspecting. Test takers often are anxious, anxious that their future hangs in the balance.
- It is a challenge. It is a challenging test. But then again, lots of things in life are challenging. I remember thinking and saying to others, if you think this is hard, wait until you have to parent a toddler.
- That's difficult. I hate tests. This morning, we're going to be looking at a test given to somebody else.
- Maybe one of the hardest tests that someone has ever had to endure. And this test, likewise, might provoke a gasp.
- But we are not a disinterested crowd, you see, because the question on this test, God will now give to each one of you. And me. The text this morning is Genesis chapter 22.
- [3 : 30] You can find that on page 15 of the Pew Bible ahead of you. Just flip to the first book of the Bible and start to flip forward. If you're not familiar with the Bible, the big numbers are the chapter numbers and the smaller numbers are the verse numbers.
- So find the big number 22 as we read God's Word together. God's Word says this. 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.

[4 : 46] 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 laid it on Isaac, his son.

And he took in his hands the fire and the knife. So they both of them, 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 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. 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.

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.

[5 : 55] 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 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. 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. Abraham lived at Beersheba. This is God's word. Your answer to this test reveals what is your highest treasure.

[7 : 15] And God confronts you and I with the question, I am prominent, but am I preeminent in your heart?

We'll look at this test in three parts. Point number one, we've faith tested. Point number two, faith proven. And point number three, faith in the substitute.

Faith tested, faith proven, faith in the substitute. In verse one, the spotlight is now on Abraham. Faith is tested.

The opening comment sets the stage. After these things, God tested Abraham. And the test is jaw-dropping.

God commands the unthinkable. Abraham, sacrifice your son on the altar as a burnt offering. A gruesome affair. Now put yourself in Abraham's shoes.

[8 : 18] God, anything for you but this? But this? One thing to lose my son, but to slay him by my own hand? And God wants this to strike Abraham like a bolt of lightning.

He wants this like to land on his chest like 2,000 tons of bricks. Why? Why? Notice how the Lord describes Isaac. He could have just said, hey, take Isaac and go.

But God doesn't do that. Look at what he says. Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah.

Each word hammers the nail deeper down. Each word twists the knife in his heart. The preciousness of the object compounds the horror of the command.

Parents, this story tears you apart. Some of you are gasping. This is outrageous. I mean, what kind of God would give such a command? I mean, if you and I were to do that, I'd be put in jail.

[9 : 29] And at my trial, I don't think the defense of, look, I was just following God's orders would fly. Now, of course, this is designed to be shocking. And the God of the Bible is not a God of human sacrifice.

The law of Moses strictly forbade the practice. In Jeremiah 19, verse 5, God says it never even entered his mind that his people would engage in human sacrifice.

You know, historically, when Christianity enters a culture, the sacrificing stops. You don't find that in Eastern religions and cultures. You know, in fact, William Carey, a missionary to India, is honored today for relentlessly fighting to end the diabolical practice of widow burning and human sacrifice in India.

Yes, this is a shocking command. And just a few chapters earlier, Abraham asked, will not the divine judge of the earth do what is right? All that God says and does is good.

His ways are perfect, like Silva refined seven times. So I don't think God was commanding Abraham to commit a crime. Instead, God was commanding Abraham to execute a righteous judgment that was due.

[10 : 49] You see, just like Isaac, we all deserve to die for our sins. At any moment, at any time, God can take your life. In this period of redemptive history, he is using Abraham to accomplish that divine judgment.

I mean, keep reading the Old Testament, and he will use Israel as his means of accomplishing judgment to the surrounding nations. So if you think God is calling you to do that today, I can assure you, you are mistaken.

But now Moses, the author, lets us in on a secret. This is a test. So this editorial comment cues us into what God is doing.

This is a test for Abraham. Now this is not because the Lord needs to learn something new. No, he is omniscient. He knows what's in your heart.

This is a test for Abraham. Let me put it this way. God did not want Isaac's life. He was after Abraham's heart.

[11 : 56] And this test was like smelling salts to wake Abraham up, to find out the facts of what's actually inside his heart. Was God really his highest treasure?

Now, of course, Abraham doesn't know this. You know, it's not like someone came up to him and said, Hey, you know that test, that command God's about to give you? It's just a test. Don't worry about it.

Abraham doesn't know the end of the story. He must have been thinking, Why are you doing this to me, oh God? God, do you really mean good for me? The perplexity of it all.

Why are you commending this? Friend, this is an attribute of God that you don't find in systematic theologies, but ask any older saint, and they will tell you about it.

Their experience of walking with God through trials has taught them this firsthand. And the attribute is this, the perplexity of God.

[13 : 00] You see, God will disregard your plans and your proposals about how your life ought to go, and providentially he works out his own plan, a plan that sometimes seems to create a dark horizon as you look into the future.

And like Paul, they can say, I've been perplexed, but not driven to despair. Friends, this is what the scriptures promise. Is it not? Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as 1 Peter says.

God will use trials to nurture your faith, to refine it, and to purify it. The psalmist writes, O Lord, in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

Why? So that I might learn your statutes. God afflicts his people. If you are here and you are considering Christ and Christianity, Christianity is not about superficial smiles, a happy, clappy life like you see on TV.

No, it's deep, it's weighty, it's eternal, it's glorious. Jesus will demand everything from you. Jesus promises for those who would follow him, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

[14 : 22] There is a cost. The call of discipleship says you must give him all, even the things that are most precious to you.

Now, paraphrasing Aaron A. as a second century pastor, he puts it like this, if you are to be in the family of Abraham, you must take up your cross, as Isaac did the wood. Following him will not be easy, but it is worth it.

If you answer the call to discipleship, that's the path of freedom from sin. Discipleship means joy. God gives you himself. First comes the cross, but there is a crown.

God says, give me all of you, all of your hopes, all of your dreams, give it, put it in my hands. You know, in chapter 12, God calls Abraham to go forth from his native land.

Leave everything behind you. Leave your kin, leave your clan, leave your country, and follow me. And that same phrase to go is repeated here. And commentators have pointed out in chapter 12, God commanded Abraham to walk away from his past.

[15 : 35] Now, in chapter 22, God is saying, walk away from your future. Put your whole life, your past, your future, put it all into my hands.

God tells Abraham, take your most precious object and give it to me. God here is commanding worship. Look down at verse 5.

The key word in verse 5 is the word worship. I and the boy will go over there and worship. That's what burnt offerings were meant for.

Worship through sacrifice. God is commanding worship. But on the surface, this makes no sense, though. It makes no sense.

God's commands appear to be contradicting his own promises. What is this test all about? Is it really necessary? Look with me at how the chapter begins.

[16 : 35] After these things. So to put this test into context, let's paint a portrait of Abraham's life. Because this was not the first test that Abraham had to endure.

Up until this point, there were ups and downs, twists and turns, as Genesis follows the saga of Abraham and Sarah's life. And rewind back to chapter 12. God calls Abraham out and makes a promise to bless the world through Abraham, through a promised offspring.

And his descendants would outnumber the stars. Afterwards, what you see is a man who didn't have much faith in that promise.

Now, good old Abe obeyed when God called him out of the land of Ur. But by nature, he was not an honest Abe.

By nature, he was not a man of much courage. True faith was present, but it was not perfect. Faithful, but flawed.

[17 : 40] Consider in Genesis chapter 13, right after leaving to go to the land of Canaan, at the first sign of trouble, when a famine hits, he says, I'm getting out of here.

He hightails it to Egypt and doesn't trust God to provide. Not much faith. And there in Egypt, rather than trusting God, he is more concerned about with himself than the safety of his wife.

Afraid that Pharaoh would kill him for his wife, he chooses to deceive and passes off Sarah as his sister and so risks her safety. Not much faith. In Genesis 16, after 10 years of waiting for this promised child, impatient desires led to foolish plans.

At Sarah's insistence, Abram says, okay, I believe there will be a promised offspring. And then he takes the process into his own hands. He says, okay, maybe I'll speed this process up by collaborating with my servant Hagar.

And you all know how that turned out. That was a complete disaster. If that weren't bad enough, in Genesis 20, he pawns off his wife as his sister a second time to Abimelech, a local ruler.

[18 : 53] Not much faith. Doesn't trust that God's going to provide for him. Now, don't get me wrong. Abraham does have his moments. He does display courage as he rescues his nephew Lot.

He displays nobility and dignity as he refuses wealth from the king of Sodom. He displays reverence for God. He wanted God to get the credit that only God deserved.

But friend, do you see, he was a seesaw. Sincere faith rising up and doubting as he comes back down. Up and down he went. Friend, he's like you and me, isn't he?

You know, nowhere in the New Testament does it highlight Abraham's failures. Not in Romans, not in Galatians, not in Hebrews 11. No, he is honored. What an illustration of the God of grace.

Despite his flaws, God remained gracious and merciful throughout his life. That's the kind of God we serve, friend. Abraham believed God, so he was justified by faith.

[20 : 00] And if you are sincerely trusting in Christ, God does not look at you and just see your failures. And my failures. He is a God of grace. And despite our wayward hearts, God never wavered from his promises.

And as we fast forward in chapter 21, after 25 years of waiting, Isaac had finally arrived. His name means laughter. This is a child who brought joy and laughing to Sarah and Abraham.

All of God's promises hinged on Isaac. Ishmael wasn't the heir. Isaac is the promised heir. And Ishmael had been sent away. That's why God calls Isaac his only son.

God gave them the child. And now in the very next chapter, God wants a child back. Do you prize the giver or the gift? That's what's precipitating this test.

The Lord is asking him and us, what is your highest treasure? What is the most precious object to you? Point number one was faith tested. Point number two is faith proven.

[21 : 09] If the test was shocking, Abraham's response is equally shocking. What we see is unflinching obedience. Verse three is shocking.

Look down. And it reads, Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac. Wow. No hesitation, no reluctance, no delay.

Remember God told Abraham that he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? What was Abraham's response? He says, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Hold on. What if there are 50 righteous people?

What if there are 45? Eventually they settle on 10. For the sake of 10 people, God would not destroy the city. Here, not a single word is spoken.

He doesn't even ask why. For three days, there is deafening silence. In verse three, he takes two men with his son Isaac and he immediately sets out.

[22 : 17] This was a three-day journey. This was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. There were plenty of chances to hit a U-turn. All you see is a resolve to obey God.

Unflinching obedience. Look with me. You even see how Abraham trusts God and how he responds. He says, here I am. In other words, he is saying, God, all that I am on the inside is yours.

Grant what you will. Simple trust is shown by his readiness to obey. Here I am. If you've ever seen the movie Princess Bride, this is like when Buttercup gives Wesley a farm boy chores to do.

No matter how menial or mundane, Wesley responded to every command with as you wish. And then you realize that's an expression of Wesley's loving loyalty.

His love is on display in how he responds. And here, Abraham is expressing his love for God. Here I am. Now, Abraham was made righteous by faith alone.

[23 : 36] It was grace from beginning to end. Nothing we do saves us except by grace through faith in Christ. But friends, obedience matters. Obedience matters.

Obedience matters. When James reached into the Old Testament to find an example of true living faith, this is where he turns. We demonstrate saving faith by obedience to God.

James 2, verse 21, James writes, 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. Now, of course, we know that James is not saying you and I are saved on the basis of our works.

Read Romans 4 if you're at all confused about that. Rather, genuine faith is transforming. Our obedience is corroborating evidence that our faith is a living faith.

[24 : 41] Not perfect obedience, but sincere obedience. If there's no obedience, friends, it's a dead faith and our profession is phony. Abraham is a portrait of living faith.

But notice something else about Abraham's response. You know, it's remarkable that there is no indication of how he felt. You know, his feelings weren't the North Star.

God's commands were. But we can fill in the lines. I mean, the previous chapter, he was troubled when Ishmael was sent away. We can fill in the blanks. Put yourself in his shoes, like a ship on the perilous sea tossed around in a fierce storm.

He may have been doubting, frustrated and angry as he chopped the wood. He might be thinking, God, you cannot be serious. This is crazy. In this trial, was he tempted to accuse God?

God, all you do is take. Take, take, take. You're a taker. When's the last time you've ever given me anything, God? Was he tempted to think, God, you've deceived me?

[25 : 50] Or was he tempted to think, how in the world am I going to explain this to Sarah? We don't know. It doesn't say. I think the point this is making is that no matter how you feel, friends, you are called to obey God's commands.

Your feelings, my feelings, are false lights that could lead us astray, whereas God's commands are the North Star. A.J. Gordon, one of the founders of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, once told a story about taking a walk one day near a farm.

He happened to look across a field, and he saw a house. And beside the house, he saw what looked like a man pumping furiously at a well. The man seemed tireless, pumping furiously and fast, up and down, up and down, on and on.

As he watched, the man never slowed down. The man never took a break. What a remarkable sight of strength and endurance, he thought to himself.

But as he got closer, he saw something interesting. What he saw was that the man was pumping the well, but the well was pumping the man.

[27 : 09] In fact, it was a wooden figure painted to look like a man. And the hand was merely attached to the well. The well was pumping the man. The well was doing the work.

And this story illustrated a principle that persistence and perseverance and service to God is a work of God. The mature disciple has learned the art of holding onto the handle.

Jesus says the same, does he not? Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. I think this story shows that Abraham is firmly holding onto the handle and he's holding on for dear life.

Look at verse 5. Don't miss that last phrase. Abraham says, we will worship and come again to you. You know, it's not the two of us are going and only one of us will return.

It's we will go, we will worship, we will come back. I and the boy are coming back to you. I mean, what's happening? How could Abraham possibly say that?

[28 : 14] Well, in this dark moment, God's word is shining bright in his mind. There's an old axiom. True faith trusts God's heart even when it cannot trace God's hand.

Abraham trusted his father. He trusted God. God made a promise. Now, Abraham is reasoning from that promise. And Abraham reasons that God always keeps his word.

And he promised, he made a promise that Isaac was the promised offspring. So the only way of keeping that promise is that God has to raise him from the dead.

Now, I don't think he'd ever seen that before. But that's what we read earlier in Hebrews 11. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead.

His hand is on the handle. And it wasn't just his knowledge of the promise, but it was also his experience of God's faithfulness that anchored him in the storm.

[29 : 22] God had already brought life out of death at Isaac's birth. It was ridiculously impossible for Sarah at 99 years old to give birth. But he knew that the same God who brought out that miraculous birth could somehow bring about a resurrection from the dead.

He saw how God was faithful to bring about his promises, even when he was foolish and made a mess of things. That is a source of Abraham's obedience.

God keeps his word. God keeps his word. Our Father, brothers and sisters, is a God of truth. And he does not lead you astray.

He speaks to us. He guides us. He comforts us. He comforts us. No word has God spoken has yet been broken. Amen? So build your life upon this word.

This is the lamp, the north star, the compass that points the true north. The chart and map that will never lead you astray.

[30 : 29] The true light in the darkness. Hold fast the word. Count upon it. Hold on to it. The faithfulness of God to his word is the foundation of your hope and my hope in this new year.

God never breaks his promises. You know, Hudson Taylor, a missionary, once wrote, holding his faithfulness, we may go into every province of China.

Holding his faithfulness, we may face with calm and sober, but confident assurance of victory, every difficulty and danger. Let us not give him a partial trust, but daily, hourly serve him, counting on his faithfulness.

So, brother and sister, you two count on his faithfulness. Hold on to it. In your trial, keep your hand firmly on the handle of God's faithfulness.

Now, I know some of you are going through deep pains, hard struggles, uncertain futures. But, friend, let your knuckle be white as you hold on to the handle.

[31 : 35] Because if you are clinging to God, that means he is clinging to you. Remember, friend, recall, recite, recollect God's faithfulness to you this past year.

This is great medicine for the suffering soul. That is how you will persevere through severe testing. And this is here is a severe test. Look at verse 7. Isaac asks a haunting question.

Dad, I see the fire in the wood, but where is the lamb? Then in verse 8, Abraham responds, that God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.

Now, this is subtle, but those who know Hebrew see it. You can translate this verse like this. God will provide for himself a lamb burnt offering, my son.

God is providing you. At that moment, Isaac is beginning to understand what is happening here. He himself would be the sacrifice.

[32 : 40] Now, Isaac is at least a teenager here, old enough to carry the wood on his back, and Abraham is at least 100 years old. Now, teenagers, if you had to throw it down in self-defense, and it was between you and a 100-year-old man, you might not be the strongest, you might not be the fastest, you might not be the most athletic, but I'm taking you in that fight.

Right? Isaac is a teenager. He doesn't run. He doesn't even try to escape. I think that's why in verse 8 at the end, it emphasizes they march together toward Moriah.

Isaac trusts his father. Almost 1,300 years later, did the prophet Isaiah have an Isaac-like Messiah in mind?

Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearer is a silence, so he opened not his mouth. Isaac and Abraham, a father and a son, walk together to Moriah in unity.

Now, mark it down. This is godly parenting. Not literally sacrificing. God wouldn't ask that to you. His word is clear. Rather, entrusting your children to God.

[33 : 54] Parents, this is a good opportunity, as any, to remind ourselves that God has given you and I our children, and they ultimately belong to him. Don't destroy your children by idolizing them.

By idolizing their worldly success, give them over to God. And parents, like Abraham, you might need to make a difficult decision this next year.

Maybe it's a new job, a new place to live. Maybe God will call you to another church to labor for his kingdom there. Learn from Abraham's example. As you wrestle with God, bring your children along with you.

Look at how tenderly he speaks to Isaac. Aim to walk in unity with your children, however best you can. Talk to them. Bring them along. Invite them to pray with you as you discern what is best for your family.

Pray with them as you discern what difficult decision you might need to make. to the extent you can aim to march together with your children. In verse 9, the narrative now moves into slow motion.

[35 : 04] Moses wants you to take in every detail. It says, Abraham built the altar and laid the wood. And then he bound Isaac.

And he laid him down. And he reached out his hand and took the knife. Wow, this is about to happen. If you're watching this on TV, this is when the camera zooms in into the white-knuckled hand holding the knife.

There's screechy music, a dramatic pause, and then they cut to the commercial. Point number three is faith in the substitutes.

At the last moment, the angel says, Abraham, Abraham, hallelujah, stop. Okay, whew. That was close. It sometimes says that, it's been said that God sometimes doesn't come through until the last minute.

This is the last second. Do not lay your hand on the boy. For now I know that you fear God. Seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

[36 : 08] And the angel directs his attention to the substitute. God providentially provides a ram. The substitute dies.

Isaac lives. And Abraham named that place the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day, on the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided.

God will see that the sacrifice is provided. God is saying, don't you see? I provide the sacrifice.

God himself must provide the chosen sacrifice. And this theme now gets repeated over and over again. What protects Isaac?

The substitute ram. What protected Israel from God's judgment at the Passover? Nothing but the blood of the lamb. A substitute in the people's place.

[37 : 04] A lamb died so the people could live. And the substitute sacrifice was institutionalized in the day of atonement, where the yearly Passover lamb was slain.

If you look at verse 2 again, you discover that these events took place on the mountain of Moriah. Where is that? Well, 2 Chronicles 3, verse 1 tells us, then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah.

The place where Abraham stood is where the temple would later be built. The place where God was preparing his people year after year for the Lamb of God. Now, when Moses' audience was reading this, I think they would have seen themselves in Isaac.

The people needed a substitute sacrifice. The people needed a mediator. Without a mediator, they were in danger of God destroying them.

I mean, that's a great riddle of the Old Testament. Is it not? How can a sinful people dwell with the Holy God? And that is a great riddle of our lives, friends.

[38 : 18] You see, God created you in his image. He created you and me, and because of that, he has authority over us. God is holy. And because he is holy, left to ourselves, you and I are on a collision course with divine wrath.

And like Isaac here, you and I are naturally bound. We are bound by the power of sin. Slaves to sin, enemies to God, and like Isaac, the knife of God's judgment hung over our heads.

Powerless to save ourselves. We can do nothing. Nothing you could do could stay his hands. You and I, like Israel, need a substitute. But this passage is like a diamond.

If you turn it around, it's like a kaleidoscope, and another picture forms. Because not only is Isaac a picture of us, he pictures the Savior. Does he not? Everything in this passage points to Jesus.

I think it's important that a pre-Christian Jewish commentary said this, Isaac, with wood on his back, was like a condemned man carrying a cross.

[39 : 30] That very Mount Moriah is where the cross of Calvary would be erected. Where a father led his son up the mountain to be condemned.

Jesus is the Savior and the substitute. And what God prevented Abraham from doing, he himself did. Jesus is the true and greater Isaac.

Isaac was a pattern that the Savior would fulfill. A shadow in Jesus is the fulfillment. See, the Father took his son, his only son, whom he loved, and offered him up as a sacrifice.

You see, when the knife of God's wrath hung over our heads, the Savior says, I have come to be their substitute. And like Isaac, he completely trusts and obeys his Father.

But he does so perfectly. John the Baptist says, he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. And out of a burning building where we are headed for destruction, Jesus looks in and says, these men and women are mine.

[40 : 37] Out of a burning building filled with people who oppose me and hate me, he goes in and he rescues us. A burning building filled with hatred and sin, filled with people who love darkness rather than the light.

He goes in to rescue you. because at the cross, he takes your place and my place. The Son willingly laid down his life in obedience to his Father as a substitute for sinners.

All the blame he takes on himself. There was no ram in the thicket. There was no one to yell, stop! The Father did not relent as he pours out his wrath on his own Son.

He did this for all who to return from their sin and put their trust in him alone. On the cross, the Lamb of God died so that you could live. Now you say, I can't, I can't, I'm too far gone, I'm weak, I'm unclean, I'm vile, Jesus would never accept me.

But friend, Jesus came to save sinners. You can't reach up to God, but you see, God has reached down to you. When you nail Jesus to the tree, when we nail Jesus to the tree, he looks us in the eye and he forgives us of all of our sins.

[41 : 54] He is the God that provides. Jesus now says, give me your heart. Take up your cross and follow him. And the passage ends with God repeating the promise.

At verse 16, God gives an oath. No person is greater than God, so he swears by himself. He repeats the promise of Genesis 12 that Abraham's descendants, those who have the same faith as Abraham, will outnumber the stars in heaven and the sands.

But then he adds to the promise. He adds to the promise in the second half of verse 17. This single offspring, the Lord Jesus, will possess the gate of his enemies.

You see, the promised offspring will wage war against his enemies and he will win. If the gates are taken, the whole city is taken. The mighty champion Jesus triumphed by taking the gates of the enemy city when he rose from the dead.

He conquered the grave. The city is his. He conquered and crushed the serpents. Oh, friends, this text is not about us how to have the same faith as Abraham.

[43 : 07] This text shows you what the Father went through to give you his only son. And don't you see, the same God who tests you is the God who provides for you every step of the way.

He provides the fruits of the Holy Spirit joy and peace. He provides rest. How can you be sure that God loves you in times of trial and testing?

What God said to Abraham in verse 12 at the foot of the cross, we can say to the Father, now we know you love us seeing as you have not withheld your son, your only son from us.

Paul makes the same statement in Romans 8 verse 32. So Christian, when God tests you, he will always provide for you.

So when he calls you and I to give up our Isaacs, those things that are the most precious to us, God will provide for you. Put it all into your loving Father's hands.

[44 : 13] The love of God is your treasure that can never be taken away. If you're looking at an uncertain future, if you're holding your Father's hand, all is well.

You can put everything into his hands. We cling to him because he is clinging to us. Now I don't know what the new year holds, but I know two things are for certain. God will be faithful and he will provide.

Finances, family, sickness, suffering, and unexpected pregnancy. He provides for every Christian. He always has and he always will.

Though friends fail you, enemies and foes surround you, the fiery trials threaten to consume you. Don't forget this, brother and sister. The Lord will provide for you.

On that you can rely. He is always with you. To conclude, the Hebrew for the divine name is well known. Jehovah Jireh.

[45 : 16] And this became the motto of the China Inland Mission. Hudson Taylor hung a picture with two Hebrew words on it. The first word was Ebenezer, which means hitherto has the Lord helped us.

A depiction of God's past provision. The second was Jehovah Jireh. The Lord will provide. One looked back while the other looked forward.

One was a reminder of God's faithfulness, the other of God's promises. So friend, look upon your past Ebenezers and then put your trust in Jehovah Jireh.

Hang your hope on this one who was hung for you. Let's pray. Oh Father in Heaven, you are a great provider. Lord, we pray that you would encourage us, strengthen us in the trials that you bring to us, the tests that you call us to go through.

Lord, you are a faithful God. Would that be a reality for our hearts this morning and this new year? Provide for your children, we pray. We are weak, but you are strong. We pray this in Jesus' name.

[46 : 26] Amen.