

XXXVIII. Genesis in Biblical Perspective

The Gospel of Christ from Genesis

“The Lord Will Provide”

Genesis 22

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This is the Word of God. It's the truth. Genesis 22:1–2 says [1] *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”* [2] *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.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and our prayer is that God would allow this His Word to be preached for you.

John 3:16 says [16] *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* I have often contemplated that verse especially the part that says ‘gave His only Son.’ I have tried to put myself in such a position. Would I give up my only son? I have three children, two daughters and a son. Would I give up any of them? Would I be willing to give them up for someone else to live? In other words, if your life was in the balance and the only way for you to live was for me to give up my son, would I? Hopefully your esteem of me will not be too much diminished because I don't think I could. Perhaps you should get ready to check out. I hope that by the grace of God I would be willing to give myself for someone else, but to give my son?

One might be thinking “God gave His only Son but we don't have to do that?” Do we? Hold that thought in your mind and come back to Abraham. He was called and commanded to give up his son and not just one, but two. There was the natural son, the son of the bond woman Hagar and his name was Ismael. Abraham had to send him away. Now God comes some years later and says “Abraham I want you to sacrifice your only son, the son whom you love.” Tuck this away in your mind. Radical obedience to Jesus Christ, full obedience to Jesus Christ, it's not what we do to be saved but it's what saved people do. Radical obedience to Jesus Christ is absolutely impossible without knowing God, not just knowing God's Word and God's commands, but knowing God. That's the only thing that brings Abraham through this – knowing God. It is only when I know the graciousness and faithfulness of God that I am able to embrace His call to me as a saved man to radical obedience in His commandments.

This passage starts off with a test. In Genesis 22:1 it says that God tested Abraham. Satan's tests or tempts to bring you to sin are to destroy you. God tests to grow you. Satan's tests are like that in the garden and Jesus in the wilderness but God's tests are to refine you, to grow you. We are given a little insight here that Abraham didn't have. Abraham was not informed that God was going to test him like we are here in the Scripture. Abraham received a command, *“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.”* It was a direct command, “Abraham, kill Isaac (laughter).” God enhances this commandment to an even higher distress point for a distraught Abraham. God tells him to sacrifice Isaac and says three things about Isaac – your son, your only son, whom you love.

We know the end of the story and this doesn't hit us like it must have hit Abraham who at that moment had just sent away Ishmael. Now he is called to kill laughter. God has instructed him to listen to Sarah and send away his natural son. Now this supernatural son that had come by this miraculous birth of a 100 year old man and a 90 year old woman, God says to sacrifice him. God calls him to do it at a place, "Go to the land of Moriah." This is interesting because there is some emphasis in the text. Ten times the word son is used and so far we've used it twice in the first two verses. As I read through Genesis 22 you will also notice that the word place is emphasized. He was to go to a place called Moriah, a mount on Moriah. The place gets its name from this event. Moriah means the place where the Lord provides, sees to it.

So where is that place? That place is not new to Abraham. Abraham has already been there and looked up at Mount Moriah. It was the day he met Melchizedek in the Valley of the Kings. The Valley of the Kings is at the foot of Mount Moriah. In II Chronicles 3:1 Mount Moriah is the place where David will be sent by the Lord to buy the threshing floor of Ornan. Then David's son Solomon will build the Solomonic Temple at this place where hundreds of years prior to that Abraham will bring Isaac to sacrifice. Here's the test.

What is Abraham's response? This is found in Genesis 22:3-10 which says *[3] 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. [4] On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. [5] 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." [6] 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. [7] 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?" [8] Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. [9] 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. [10] Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.*

What is Abraham's response? By faith, he obeyed. This is the fifth time the angel of the Lord has spoken to Abraham. When the angel of the Lord spoke to him about Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham began to negotiate. When He spoke to Abraham about sending Ismael away because of his opposition to the child of promise, Isaac, Abraham began to negotiate. Now God tells him to sacrifice his son, his only son, the whom he loves and Abraham obeys. Here are three things about his obedience. His obedience is immediate. In Genesis 22:3 it says Abraham got up early in the morning, to obey. From the text we know he is a three days journey from Moriah which is what we call Jerusalem today, where the temple was going to be built. The last time we heard about Abraham getting up early in the morning was back in Genesis 21 when he had to send away Ishmael with Hagar. When Abraham gets up to take Isaac he gets two servants, a donkey, cuts wood and puts it on the donkey, gets the knife and takes Isaac. He doesn't get a lamb. He goes to Mount Moriah.

There is not only immediate obedience but there is resolute obedience. He repeats this the second day. He repeats it the third day. This isn't the movement of obedience in the flesh of excitement where God has said something and he is going to do it. This isn't only immediate obedience without negotiation, fully embraced but it's resolute, the first day, the second day and the third day.

Then it becomes ultimate obedience. When they arrive at the land, the wood is taken off of the donkey and it's placed with its straps upon Isaac. Isaac begins to carry the wood up Mount Moriah, the hill of the Lord and His provision. As they go up the hill Abraham is carrying the knife and the fire and leaves behind the two servants. He says to the two servants "I and my boy are going up to worship and we shall return to you." As the two go up the hill the silence must have been deafening and it is broken by Isaac. This is not an unusual event to sacrifice. He is reasoning. They did this regularly. Isaac says, "Father, I see the wood, the fire, the knife but where is the lamb?" Abraham looks at his only son whom he loves and says "The Lord will provide the lamb, my son." Abraham has no premonition of a ram caught in a thicket. Abraham is taking the gift of God to Him to sacrifice to God, the son.

Isaac utters no more words and as they arrive there, Isaac is bound upon the altar upon the wood. The fire is nearby but first must be the death. Abraham raises his knife and it is at that point the angel of the Lord speaks again. Let's look further in the text. Genesis 22:11–19 says [11] *But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."* [12] *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."* [13] *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.* [14] *So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide" (Jehovah Jireh); as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."*

[15] *And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven* [16] *and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17] 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, [18] and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."* [19] *So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.*

Here is the test. Here is Abraham's obedience. Now here is the Lord's deliverance. Remember, this is the fifth appearance of the angel of the Lord that Abraham has now been blessed with. The angel of the Lord is an Old Testament phrase describing the presence of deity, specifically the second Person of the Trinity. We call this a Christophany, a pre-incarnation appearance and ministry of Jesus Christ. This time the angel of the Lord indicates urgency to Abraham by calling his name twice in Genesis 22:11. Genesis 22:12 the angel of the Lord says, [12] *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."* The Lord then provides a ram in the thicket. The ram is brought forth and placed upon the altar. Isaac is loosed and the ram dies in

place of Isaac. Now Isaac and Abraham go back down the mountain and with the two servants they all return to Beersheba.

I believe there are three marvelous moments in the life of Abraham that proclaim the Gospel. In Genesis 15:6 it says [6] *And Abraham believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.* Here is that marvelous moment where the covenant is established. Abraham sacrifices the animals but it's not Abraham that walks through the covenant to the King but it's the King who comes through the covenant to Abraham and says "I will establish My covenant." Now we have this marvelous, glorious, unfathomable picture of our Redeemer, God's son, God's only Son, Jesus Christ.

I'd like to give you three very practical takeaways from this text. Here is the first one. Our obedience is rooted on the highway of God's infallible Word but it must be rooted in the rich soil of God's infallible faithfulness. Abraham has to be destroyed but yet he becomes determined and obeys immediately, resolutely and ultimately. How is he able to do this? It is simple yet profound. Abraham is a theologian. Theology is knowing God. The only way Abraham is to remain obedient with resolution to the ultimate point of raising his hand to kill his son is he is a theologian. God's Word has come to him. God's Word has commanded him. When God gives a command my call is to obey but the same Word of God that gives commands for obedience gives promises to trust.

God has given a promise to Abraham when He said "I'm going to give you a son and in Isaac I will bless you with a nation from all the nations that you cannot number." Here is the supernatural son of the miraculous birth that is to be the heir, Isaac, the laughter of joy, the laughter of faith, fulfilled. It is through Isaac in which all of the promises of God are going to be moved to fulfillment. It's through this Isaac that the promises of God have been declared and now the call of God is to kill. Do you know what Abraham does? He begins to reason. "God, has commanded me to sacrifice Isaac. I must obey." Yet it is stated that through this Isaac the land would be inherited because of the blessings of God and a nation would be established and a line of redemption would be established through which all of the nations of the earth be blessed. "So God must be going to raise him up."

That's why that interesting comment is made to the two servants. As Abraham prepares to go up Mount Moriah he turns to the two servants and says in Genesis 22:5, "*Stay here with the donkey; **I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.***" Is that the flight of a fanciful preacher that is reading that into the text? No, that is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament that tells me that's what Abraham did. He theologized his way through this process.

I want to look at Hebrews 11. There are numerous passages that Abraham makes the Hall of Faith and we're not going to look at them all but here is an interesting one. Hebrews 11:17-19 says [17] *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, [18] of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."* [19] *He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.* So he was thinking "If God commanded me to kill him and that we're going to be blessed through him, then after I kill him God must be going to raise him so I and the boy will be back." He believed in the resurrection.

Why am I making this point? It is because we live in which the church is on the run in our culture and we think the way to reach this culture is through light church, when in reality if we don't take the time to teach the Word of God, God's people will never be able to rise to the heights of radical obedience. If you don't know God you will never be able to lay all on the altar for God. It is in the soil of knowing God that radical obedience, motivated by the love of God, under the canopy of the fear of God, the respect of God, is nurtured and grown.

We are gloriously recapturing truth in a very special way among the people of God like never before. Lately, I've been so encouraged in this that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and it's Christ's obedience that is my righteousness. It's Christ's death whereby I'm forgiven. I'm so grateful for that but it seems as if accompanying that is a movement in the church of Jesus Christ that says "if I'm fully, freely and finally saved by the death and obedience of Christ then my obedience is serendipity." The obedience of Christians today is treated in a cavalier manor. We know that we're not saved by our obedience but how in the world can I ever treat obedience to God's Word, as a Christian, as if it's inconsequential or trivial or if I do it fine or if I don't do then I'm forgiven of my sins. How can I treat it that way when God in His Word says this to Abraham after his obedience, "Abraham, now I know"?

I know God is omniscient. God knew the facts of Abraham's devotion to Him. God knew He would keep him but God is a Person. God has personality therefore when we respond to God there is a relationship that is established and there is an experiential knowledge that God now declares "Now, I know you fear Me." You won't walk away from that marriage, those children, you will stand firm for the faith, you will teach the whole counsel of God, you will seek to be obedient to God, you will flee to God's throne in confession of your sin, and knowing that you're forgiven you'll arise from God's throne in resolution to be obedient, not for salvation but for the Savior. Now I know that you fear Me.

Don't dismiss the fact that He then expands, extends and gloriously describes the covenant. Many of us (Christians and churches) are flitting away ministry, what God would entrust to us because we treat obedience to the Word of God in a cavalier fashion. Obedience is not what saves us but obedience is what saved people love to do. We're very adept and rightly so. God, I love you. I want to obey You. I want a pure marriage. I don't want this immorality. I don't want the addictions of food, drink, or sex but sneaks in among believers very quickly is not the idolatry of the addictions and appetites of life but believers begin to make idols of God's blessings.

God says to Abraham "Now I know. I blessed you with Isaac but you have not enshrined My blessing as an idol. You love Me. It's not My blessings that have become your affections and your allegiance but it's Me." God, thank You for my three children and my four grandchildren, but I cannot let blessings be enshrined as idols. I cannot allow my spouse, my marriage, God's good gifts, my job, my home, and all these things that God has given me to rise up in the enshrinement of idolatry. It is the Lord alone that is to have our affection and allegiance. Even His gifts to us are on the altar. Now I know that you fear Me and you love Me.

Here is the second takeaway. There is the major key and there is the minor key. The major key that stands out that is the trajectory from Genesis 22 that lands in Hebrews 11 where it talks of the faith of Abraham which is immediate, resolute and to the end,

there he is ready to all that he is called to do but there is something underlying here that began to take my heart and that's Isaac's submission. I feel it as they are walking up Mount Moriah and he has this wood on him. He looks around and says "Father, where is the lamb?" "The Lord will provide." What was he thinking as he is placed on the altar on the wood, bound and sees his father's hand with the knife raised? I don't know what he was thinking and I won't speculate but one thing I do know is that he uttered not a word. He submitted.

So the second takeaway is that the trajectory of Isaac runs to Romans 12:1, 2 which says [1] *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* [2] *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* It is the submission of Isaac that grabs my heart so. Lord, am I willing to it all fall upon me? If only I will be obedient and honor You. The trajectory of Isaac not only goes to Romans 12 but it also goes to I Corinthians 15 because as he rises up from that altar he becomes a picture according to Hebrews 11 of the resurrection of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ and if Christ is raised then I'll be raised. If Christ is raised then all those people I loved and know Christ that I've seen their bodies are set aside. Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord and one day that grave will be opened and they'll have a new body for the new heavens and the new earth.

The trajectory of Isaac sends me to be a living sacrifice. What is the only problem with living sacrifices? The only advantage Isaac had was being tied down. As living sacrifices we keep wiggling off the altar all the time. That's why you need brothers and sisters who will help you get back up on that altar. As living sacrifices we are dying to self and it's life enjoyed in Christ.

Thirdly, is Abraham, Isaac and our salvation. Abraham's son, his only son, the son whom he loved, don't you hear it? For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (John 3:16). Abraham's hand up to kill laughter was stopped by the angel of the Lord. Now what happens? A ram is put in his place and that is pointing to the Lamb of God who will take our place, Jesus Christ. It is God's only Son, except when this place is visited by Christ, 2000 years later, and it won't be Abraham's hand that will be raised but it will be the Father's Hand, our Heavenly Father that is raised. Romans 8:31–34 says [31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* [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?* [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* [34] *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

It is under the Hand of the Father. Forget the movies, the passion, the plays for no movie will ever show this. Who was it that put Christ to death? It was the Father who delivered Him up so that we might have life. You see Isaac going up the mount with the wood and John saw it, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in John 19:17a which says [17a] *and he went out, bearing his own cross...* He ascends up that hill and there He is not taken off the altar, but there One greater than Isaac gives Himself that we might have life and life eternal. Abraham gives us that picture of the Father, but the Father gives us the fact of redemption by giving His Son as our Redeemer. The Son, willingly going beyond the

submission of Isaac, becomes that which He despises, sin, so that you and I can have eternal life, everlasting life. Now He embraces it.

What is this place called? This mountain is not called the place of Abraham's obedience or the place of Isaac's submission. This mountain is called the place where the Lord provides. The word translated for 'provide' in its root more likely should be translated 'see to it.' Jehovah Jireh literally translated is 'the Lord will see to it.' That's why Abraham can have a radical obedience. His God is faithful. He can be absolutely trusted, not only to obey His commands but in all His promises. The Lord will see to it.

I got back home after spending a couple of days with my sisters and went to check my mailbox. I received reams of letters. Did you know I won ten million dollars? What do you call that? It is junk mail. Pardon the lack of grammar but this ain't no junk mail. God's Word is true. God is able with power and God will deliver in truth.

You might be thinking "I'm not called to give up my son" and I'd say read Matthew 10:37 which says [37] *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* Don't leave here and say "God, You're at the top of my list." He is not at the top of your list. He is the list. Love Him with all of your heart, soul and mind. Give Him your children, your life, your marriage, your home and not only give Him obedience and walk away from the destructiveness of sin but give Him His blessings that He has given you, back to Him. Lay them on the altar. Be a living sacrifice.

When I was a youth pastor one of the things that absolutely overwhelmed me was when a student would actually get excited about serving Jesus. Parents went ballistic. They wanted their child to attend youth group, get off the streets, don't take drugs and don't have sex but get serious about following Jesus? I can't tell you the number of phone calls I received from parents because their kids were getting too serious about this. We want just enough to keep them out of trouble.

Forget the children for a minute. Will you and I get serious? Will we be radical about this? Lord, here is my child. Would You like to send my son or daughter to Africa? Where would You like to send them? Lord, here they are. Lord, they are there because I'm here. Lord, please know that I desire to be obedient and I want You to know it. In addition to that, I want the world to know it. There is none like You. See the trajectory of the resurrection. It's true!

I came to Christ in 1969 because a man stood in front of me as I gave him comfort for the loss of his 39 year old wife and was going to raise four daughters on his own, "Mr. Elliot I'm so sorry." He said "Harry, you need to know three things. One God is sovereign and He doesn't make mistakes. He never tells me all things are good but He says all things work together for good, even my wife going home. The second thing is I wouldn't have her back if I could. How selfish would that be of me because look at what she has now. Thirdly it will not be that long until I'll be with her." I actually became a Christian that day having seen the Gospel in someone's life like that. I had heard it all my life but then I had the chance to hear it with my eyes. I received word this past Friday that Jimmy was right. Jimmy Elliot died this past Friday but he has never been more alive than he is right now. He is with the Lord now. O the truth of everlasting life in Jesus Christ!

I want to finish with this thought. Who is the angel of the Lord? It is Jesus. He says "Abraham, Abraham, don't do it. Here's the ram. Now I know you love Me." That

angel of the Lord 2000 years later will be right back here. Psalm 24:3, 4a says [3] *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? [4a] He who has clean hands and a pure heart...* That angel of the Lord will come back now in His incarnation, finish His 33 years, walk up that same hill, not with sticks but a cross, go to a cross and the Lord will provide and we live. Praise His Name, the Lord has given us life. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word and just to examine it. O the glory of it, the majesty of it, the breath of it, the height of it, and the depth of it! Lord, if there is anyone reading this who has never yet come to the mount of the Lord, listen. Isaac said 'where is the lamb?' and that was a valid question 4,000 years ago. Now today I tell you where the Lamb is. He is standing in heaven ready to receive you and give you eternal life. O Lord, may I walk with the submission of Isaac. May I walk in the obedience of faith, knowing that my obedience is not inconsequential for You use it and You take pleasure in it. I thank You for the perfect obedience of Christ whereby I'm saved. I thank You for the opportunity to grow in obedience and follow the Savior. O God, may we rise up and walk before the Lord because we know the Lord for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.