

Bibles to Genesis chapter 22. I'll be preaching from verse one through 24. And this is such a familiar passage. It recounts, um, Abraham's attempted offering of Isaac. And I probably cannot teach you anything new. However, I want you to feel something, feel something. Feel something about what God asks Abraham to do. Feel something about Isaac. Feel something about their situation. The scripture does not go to painstaking detail to prevent you from feeling something. The scriptures do not want, or Christians, are not meant to be little robots coming without their feelings or affections. So read this passage with me and bring your feelings to it.

I'll read the word of the Lord spoken from Genesis 22. Hear now the word of the Lord. 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 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 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 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 to bind Isaac, his son, 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 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 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 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.'

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Now after these things, it was told to Abraham, Behold Milcah, also has born children to your brother Nahor. Uz, his first born, Buz, his brother, Kemuel, the father of Aram, Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlof, and Bethuel. Bethuel fathered

Rebekah. These eight milk a boar to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name is Rumah, Bor, Teba, Geham, Tehash, and Meka.

I remind you that this is God's holy and inspired word. It contains all that we need for faith and for life. The grass withers and the flower fades, but praise be our God, whose word abides forever.

Let's once again pray. Oh God, we thank you for your revelation in scripture, because without it, Without you revealing yourself to us, we would have no clue who you are and what you demand of us. May you bless this reading of your word. May you bless it as a lamp shining in a dark place. And may you sanctify us by the truth. Thy word is truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In this passage, we find the most climactic point of the relationship between Abraham and God. God has provided what he said he would, a son, Isaac. He has proven faithful to that promise, but now at the beginning of this episode, it appears as if God is reneging on that promise. He is taking back what he promised. This passage raises a plethora of questions about the covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness of God in his relationship with Abraham and all those who follow after him. Yet in the conclusion, God makes clear that he is committed to keeping his covenant promises. And although it may appear as if he is reneging, he will never be unfaithful to what he has promised.

The doctrine of the text is this. God promises always to provide for his people. God promises always to provide for his people.

In the exposition, Moses begins by briefly surveying the text under four headings. And each of these headings begin with the word monumental, monumental. First, a monumental test. Second, a monumental faith. Third, monumental provision. And fourth, a monumental blessing. In summary, test, faith, provision, and blessing.

Let's begin with the first, the monumental test. We begin in this passage by reading in verse one, after these things, God tested Abraham. At the outset, we find that God had a very deliberate intent. This is not an aimless test, but very intentional. We can all take comfort in this. that God always does what he plans. God always has an intentional plan for his people. And God is testing Abraham's faith to reveal if Abraham really trusts God. Even so, even this challenge, if so, even this challenge will not break him. Yet it is the most monumental of tests, isn't it?

Verse one and two. He 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.

The details of this demand are striking, aren't they? Consider now the four specifications for his obedience. First, your son. God says to this father, take your son and offer him as a burnt offering. 13 times in this passage it mentions Abraham's son. He became a father when the Lord gave him Isaac in chapter 21. And now God asks for him back. Take your son and offer him as a burnt sacrifice. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? Sacrifice your son?

The stakes are monumentally high here. Human sacrifices are universally forbidden in the later revelation of God. But here he says, take your son and offer him. Second, God went one step further. Your only son, your only son. Properly speaking, it was not his only son. There was born to him Ishmael, the son of his concubine Hagar. But this was the son that God promised. After God had promised his son, he had been waiting for 25 years for its fulfillment. God supernaturally provided this son to a wife who was barren. And when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, God supernaturally gifted them to give birth to a son. And now seemingly he wants to take him back.

But if he offers him, there is no hope for Israel for fulfilling this promise to make Abraham a great and mighty nation. But more than that, third, is the son whom Abraham loves, whom he loves. Abraham is not dispassionate towards Isaac, is he? Abraham is not dispassionate. He is not just the means to an end. He is not just the heir to their family, but rather Abraham loves this boy. He is the apple of his eye. He is the joy of his life. The one who brings laughter to the family. And now God has demanded the son whom he loves back. And even worse, he himself must be the one to take his own son's life.

Fourth, he must offer him as a burnt offering. Leviticus 1 provides excruciating detail on what is required when offering a burnt offering, which we can apply to Abraham in this instance. He was to lay, Abraham was to lay his sins on the boy by imputation. He was to kill him and throw Isaac's blood on the altar. Then after killing him, he was to fillet the boy, cut him all into pieces, roast him on the fire and burn him all night. Then, and only then, can he make atonement between himself and God. Can you imagine what Abraham was called to do? Can you feel what Abraham is instructed to do? Can you not feel the heartbreak of what God is obliging him to do?

But how will Abraham respond to this monumental test? This brings us to our second heading, a monumental faith. A monumental faith. We have seen two Abrahams throughout the narrative of Genesis, right? Sometimes we find a man of resilient faith, and sometimes we find an utter coward. Who will we see here? We see one who is astoundingly faithful. One who is filled with trust toward God and concedes to the will of God whatever he requests. Notice the details of his obedience in this passage.

First, he rose early. He rose early. Verse three, so Abraham rose early in the morning. Abraham did not wait. He rose first thing in the morning to obey what God had commanded. He did not hesitate. As soon as morning came, he arose eager to do what God had obliged him to do. Second, we continue to read that God, excuse me, Abraham did all of God's commands, all God's commands. Verse three again, He 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 rose and went to the place which God had told them. Abraham did all that God told him to do. He had his young men to help him as he prepared wood for the burnt offering. And he went to Moriah to wait God's further instructions. Verse four and five. 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. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you. God, Abraham did all God's commands.

However, thirdly, I would like to point out a paradox here. A paradox. God has given Abraham extremely detailed instructions, but Abraham never loses faith in the God Almighty. He knows what God is asking him to do, but never loses faith in God. I want you to notice the detail that illustrates this point that I'm trying to make. It is lacking in the English translations, but in the Hebrew verbs, this is evident. Verse five, I and the boy, we will go, we will worship,

and we will return. All these verbs are preceded by the word we. All the Hebrew words. Abraham says explicitly, we will go, we will worship, and we will return.

The intention is obvious, isn't it? Abraham expects both of them to return. This is a paradox, if ever I have seen one. God has told him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, but he expects the boy to return. And on what basis can he have this expectation? Is he just a wishful thinker? Is he blindly optimistic? No. He has a solid foundation on which to rest the sure and unbreakable promises of God. God is a trustworthy God. He has said without ambiguity, through the lineage of Isaac, I will bring you a mighty nation. Through the lineage of Isaac, he will not renegotiate those terms. He will do what he has promised, even though all appearances seem to contradict that.

Abraham walks with sure confidence in his immutable, changeless, and trustworthy God. Hebrews 11 makes this expressly clear in verse 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, 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 them back. What an astounding faith is this.

This faith is further demonstrated in the events that follow, verses five through eight. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac's son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they both went 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? And Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb of burnt offering, my son. So they both went together.

Now the plot is thickening here. He is being probed by His young boy and Abraham provides the pivotal statement of this story. God will provide. God will provide. Then the question becomes, will God provide? Will God save Isaac? Will he preserve his promise? Will he ensure the birth of the nation Israel? Or will they die here before they ever even existed? Will God provide? The plot thickens even further till it reaches a breaking point in verses nine and 10. When they came to the place of which God had told them, 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. To slaughter his only son, whom he loved. He was to slaughter that son. He was actually going to do it, wasn't he? He was actually going to do it. He binds his son to the wood on which he will burn his flesh after he slays him. And he will fillet his body and chop it all into pieces. This is remarkable faith. This is a remarkable faith, isn't it?

This brings us to our Third heading, the monumental provision of the Father. The monumental provision spoken of in verses 11 through 14. Even before Abraham is tested, God has provided for him in such a way as to equip him for this task. I have three points under this heading. First, God provides faith. God provides faith. We must acknowledge that God has endowed Abraham with this remarkable faith. Ephesians 2.8.9 says, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one can boast. No one can attribute faith to anyone but God.

And God had tested Abram's faith and the difficulties he faced before this climactic moment. The trip from Ur to Canaan, the discouragement from Sarah being barren, the separation from Lot, the battle with the kings of Mesopotamia, the wife fiasco in Egypt and Gerar, and God's blessing of him despite his unworthiness and his

unfaithfulness, the Hagar and Ishmael debacle, and the events of Sodom and Gomorrah. God has been grooming Abraham for this precise moment. And God has provided for his faith.

Second, God provides strength. God provides strength. God provides him the strength to obey even in this most heart-wrenching of situations. Abraham loves his son Isaac, but he loves God even more. He willingly relinquishes his boy, his son Isaac, in order to faithfully serve his heavenly father.

And third, God provides a substitute. The central act of this narrative is that God provides a substitute. Notice that we read in verses 11 through 14.

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 that 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 the 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 mouth of the Lord it shall be provided.

Notice the text refers to God's provision four times in just a few verses. verse 8, 13, and twice in verse 14. All these questions are answered. God does provide. He does provide a ram to die in the place of Isaac and thus to demonstrate his faithfulness to his promises and to his people. And we see that through this event, God's commitment to bless Abraham and all the nations and is monumentally evident.

The fourth heading is monumental blessing. A monumental blessing. We read in verses 15 through 18 that God will bless him just as he's promised and that he is fundamentally committed to bringing those to pass. Verse 15. And the angel of the Lord spoke 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.

Unexpectedly, God says, by myself I have sworn. By myself I have sworn. This is God's making a self-maledictory oath. a self-maledictory oath. In other words, he says, because you have done this, I swear by the highest existence possible, because no existence is greater than I myself, he says, by my own life. I will bless you and I will multiply your offspring like the stars in the heaven and the sand on the seashore. I promise that I will not be God if I don't fulfill this promise. It's one of the most awe-inspiring promises of all scripture, a self-maledictory oath. God says, if I don't fulfill this promise, may I be cursed. May I be cursed. And God always fulfills his promises, doesn't he? God always fulfills his promise.

And secondly, future blessings. We read that God not only blesses Abraham and his immediate family, but God blesses his extended family that he left in Ur of the Chaldeans. They also bear children and bless the earth. And get this, God even blesses the unbelieving family because of his relationship with Abraham. That is astounding to me. He even blesses, God even blesses his unbelieving family because of his relationship to Abraham.

As we move now towards the applications, we must acknowledge that this is truly a monumental story of a monumental test of a monumental faith of a monumental provision and blessing. But what is the point of this story? This is sometimes where people fall off track. And there are several options, but there is really only one heart of this passage.

And various attempts have been made. One is to emulate Abraham's faith. To emulate Abraham's faith. Is this the point of the story, Abraham's faith? In other words, should we primarily see it as an example of faith that we should emulate? There is some truth in this, but I don't think that this is the primary function of this narrative is to say, look at Abraham and believe like he did. It is far too moralistic and the passage itself does not say anything like this. I think not.

Secondly, God blesses those who obey him. One could argue that the point of this story is that God blesses those who obey. This is true. But is this really the point of the passage? I think not.

Third, Moses' original audience. aligns more closely with the heart of this passage. When reading scripture, this principle that we all must, that we must keep in mind is how did the original audience interpret this? We cannot impose a 21st century lens upon it. We must submit ourselves to its own outlook. For this passage, there is no doubt that Moses has a particular audience in mind when this text is being written. These are the Israelites of the first and second generation who were brought out of Egypt by God. As they are reading this passage, they are reading their own story. They are reading the very threatening of their existence in Egypt. They are to remember Isaac, who is the father of Jacob, who in turn begets the 12 tribes of Israel. If Isaac dies, Israel as a nation never comes into existence. So when God provides a ram in the place of Isaac, he is providing a substitute for the nation of Israel. The ram dies so that the people might live. God has provided in the past, and he is going to provide in the future.

But is it more than just the original audience? I think the answer is yes. What does it mean when taking the whole counsel of God in place? How does God fulfill what was spoken of in Luke chapter 24, which says every passage ultimately finds its fulfillment in Christ?

Fourthly, and finally, the heart of the text in its Christological interpretation is the provision of God's Son. the provision of God's Son. How much more clearly have we seen God's commitment to provide for his people than the giving of his Son as an ultimate substitute for them? The sacrifice of Isaac pales in comparison to the sacrifice of Christ, the only Son, the Son whom God the Father loves, who was sent as a provision for the people of God, who was sent as a substitute for the church of God, who died so that they might live. Feel the pain. Feel the pain of the father who did not stay his own hand when offering the son. Feel the weight, the gravity of the son while offering his life, being nailed to a cross to save his people from their sin. Feel the Father and the Son and providing for our greatest need, the redemption from our sins.

Yes, there are clear implications for the faith of God's people from this passage. We, like Abraham, trust a God who is faithful to his promises, evidenced by giving of his only begotten son as a provision for his people. And yes, there are moral implications for those who trust him and obey him. But this is the point of the text, that we can walk with

great confidence in our Lord knowing that his promises will never fail as seen so clearly and vividly in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even if all around us the world tells us that God has reneged on his promises, we see in the death of his son that God will never renege on his promises. He will always provide for his people when it comes to keeping his redemptive promises.

Let's go to him now in prayer.

Well, thank you for this reminder that we have in sacred scripture, the reminder that God keeps his promises and that God always provides for his people. We thank you, God, for reminding us of that. and that God provides his one and only son, the son whom he loves to take upon himself the sins of the whole world and sacrifice a perfect and blameless sacrifice to redeem us from sins. We love you and we thank you Most of all, for your son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.