

GM // name // onliners

If have Bible, [good habit] turn to Genesis 17. [on screen]

In this series we are showing how the Bible is many stories telling one big story.

Motyer, in his book “Look to the Rock”, says that the OT and NT are like two acts of the same play.

If you only see the first act of the play you miss out on the resolution.

If you only watch the second half, you miss out on the plot and the problem that is being resolved.

Not only that but a good play develops the main characters along the way so you get a more robust understanding and appreciation of who they are.

The Bible is a two act play ...

You can only fully understand who Jesus is and what salvation means if we know the whole play.

And you’ll remember from last week that this play starts anticipating Jesus right from the start.

He is the promised seed born from Eve that would crush Satan's head, rendering him and sin powerless.

And how he established the law of atonement by covering Adam and Eve with animal skins.

Today we will see God's rescue plan through seeds and sacrifices unfold even more.

Genesis 17:1-8

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

To understand God and how he has worked throughout history ...

And how he continues to work today ... requires a knowledge of covenant.

That is what is happening here between God and Abram.

God creates and defines the relationship.

He always does this ...

All God's Relationships Are Held In Covenant Promises and Expectations

So, the best way to understand your relationship with God is getting familiar with what a covenant is.

And the verses we just read are a great example.

In God's covenants He is always the initiator and the superior.

Often men create covenants as equals. [one side is not superior to the other]

In those cases, both sides come together with their needs and expectations and an agreement is hammered out.

But both have an equal say. No one person is in authority over another.

But that is not the way God's covenants work.

He is the superior.

Abram recognized this which is why he fell on his face.

That's what people do before kings. **[never hayley]**

It is why some people bow on their knees in prayer or during worship.

It is a recognition of God's superiority.

But this superiority is expressed by God in a few different ways in these verses.

He makes promises to bless Abraham.

As Hebrews 7:7 points out, "... it is without dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior."

The fact that God can even make these promises to the scale that he does proves he is superior in every way.

It's a promise that requires him to be Almighty.

He can guarantee Abram and his offspring a place among the nations of the earth. [need ultimate power for that]

He is also superior in that he is endless in days...

He can fulfill this promise in the generations to come, long after Abraham is dead.

But another intriguing exercise of authority can often be missed.

Notice how God changes Abram's name to Abraham.

Names were more than i.d. in the ancient world.

They communicated something meaningful about a person or place.

Leah, Jacob's wife, is a good example of this.

The names she gave her sons described what they meant to her own story of being the less favored sister.

Names given by parents often were monuments of remembrance of God's intervention and blessing.

Naming something was also an act of authority.

A parent exercises parental authority over their children by naming them ...

When kings would conquer nations they would often rename the captives they took for themselves.

For instance, Daniel was renamed Belteshazzar. That was his Babylonian name.

In doing that, the king exhibited his authority over Daniel.

Daniel was re-educated in Babylonian custom, history, myth, dress, language ...

His very identity was changed, even down to his name.

This was the thoroughness of being transformed into belonging to a new King and Kingdom.

In renaming Abram to Abraham God is showing himself superior.

But notice how God flexes his superiority.

He is extremely generous.

He gives him a new name, and a new land that would become a new kingdom.

God owns all the promises.

He gives and guarantees what Abraham can't.

But the covenant also comes with an expectation on Abraham.

He must WALK before God and be blameless...

[pump the brakes] ... that's a pretty tall order.

But it whispers back to what God purposed from the very beginning.

Which is what He is intent on restoring.

God's Uses Covenant To Redeem And Restore What We Lost Through Sin

In Eden, God would come "walking" in the cool of the day to be with Adam and Eve.

But in their sin they hid themselves FROM God instead of walking WITH him.

So, we see God's purpose in this covenant with Abraham is to restore what was lost in Eden.

Don't hide from me ... walk before me and with me.

Sin means we all fall short of being blameless, and therefore are unfit to walk with God.

That Hebrew word for blameless is used 85 times in the Old Testament.

On the rare occasion when it's used in reference to people, it is connected to their conduct.

For example: Psalm 15:1 and 2 says, Who can dwell in God's tent or ascend his holy hill? He who WALKS BLAMELESSLY.

Blameless is the bullseye our lives are to be aimed at.

That word blameless is also used to describe God's nature.

God isn't trying to be blameless.

He is perfect ... all his ways are perfect.

So, when we walk blamelessly we reflect the image of God, like a mirror.

That is why God cares about Abraham being blameless.
[and us]

The more we are like God, the more we reflect him, and the more others see Him.

But the problem is that sin shatters that mirror.

What we are seeing here is God making a covenant with Abraham to redeem and restore what was lost through sin.

God uses a lot of the same language in the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2...

Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, rule over it.

He placed Adam & Eve in a particular place: Eden.

Here we see God telling Abraham, I will multiply you greatly.

I will make you the father of many nations → Your offspring will fill the earth.

Kings will come from you → They will rule.

I will give you a particular place: Canaan.

See the similarities...?

See the unfolding story that God is writing?

But also see who the primary actor is...

God is taking responsibility...

He is promising Abraham that He will accomplish all these things.

But the stipulation is that Abraham must walk blamelessly.

So, what happens if he doesn't?

What is his hope?

This is a serious problem.

But, God's purpose isn't to make us strive for sinless perfection.

It's meant to expose how hopeless we are, & teach us our need for grace.

We Are Hopeless Without Outside Help

Overwhelmingly in the OT, this word "blameless" is used to describe a perfect spotless animal to sacrifice to God to atone for sin.

So when you sin there is a perfect substitute to bear the penalty and satisfy God's demand to be blameless.

This is the law of atonement by which God could make such a covenant with Abraham and expect it not to fail.

So, with that understanding we see that Abraham can be blameless.

He aims to be upright and righteous in his conduct...

To walk before God and fight sin ...

But when he does sin there is an atoning sacrifice he can offer to satisfy the covenant stipulation.

But that sacrifice has to be a spotless, perfect, sinless animal.

Which makes the next part a little confusing.

Genesis 22:1-2

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."

Not only is God demanding a human sacrifice ...

He is demanding the sacrifice of Abraham's only son ...

The very son that God said he would use to carry out his covenant promises to Abraham!

Isaac is a young man at this point. Unmarried, no kids.
If he dies, the covenant does not carry on.

God is also making a clear distinction between Isaac and Ishmael, Abraham's other son.

God says Isaac is his only son.

Which places Ishmael outside of God's covenant with Abraham.

So, there is no fallback plan.

Now this rejection of Ishmael may sound harsh, but it is consistent with God's purpose.

See, Abraham and Sarah got so old that having a child was impossible.

So they tried to take responsibility to fulfill God's covenant FOR him.

Abraham made a baby with Hagar, Sarah's handmaid...

B4 you think ... poor Sarah ... it was her idea!

Even Jerry Springer didn't get this weird.

But according to God ... Ishmael doesn't count ...

He is not a son of the covenant promise.

See, we can't fulfill God's part of his covenant.

Whenever we do that it exposes that we have more faith in ourselves than we do in God.

And God rejects these faithless works...

He calls them dead and worthless.

Which teaches us an unchanging truth...

**Keeping Covenant Is Only Possible Through Faith That
God Will Do What He Promised**

Isaac wasn't born because of Abraham and Sarah's natural effort.

God opened Sarah's womb way past the time she could bear children.

The son that came to fulfill God's promise was a miracle supplied by God's power ... not Abraham's.

So it is a bit strange that God now demands this son to be sacrificed ...

Unless God is up to something.

And He is ... though Abraham couldn't see it yet.

And that is the essence of faith.

It's obedience to God even when we don't fully understand.

But there is a reward that comes through faith-fueled obedience...

Which is hinted at in V2 in the name Moriah.

Moriah is a compound word combining vision and Jehovah.

God is calling Abraham to the land of Jehovah revelation.

Obedience to God often leads to a revelation of who God is.

This is the reward of living by faith.

This insight makes the story more potent...

God calls Abraham to journey to the land where Jehovah reveals ...

There he must sacrifice his only son on the mountain of God's choosing.

What is emerging from this account is a subtle silhouette of the greater story of redemption through Jesus.

With that in mind ... let's read on...

Genesis 22:3-14

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. **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”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

Why would Abraham make the journey, climb the mountain ... bind his only son, raise the knife?

He believed God would keep his promise.

Faith In God Means Holding Nothing Back

God stops Abraham at the last possible moment.

He knew that Abraham was willing to give him everything.

Faith requires an obedience that surrenders all we are and all we have.

It lives open-handed and generous toward God.

In many ways this story demonstrates what covenant-faith will require of us...

total surrender, total submission, total trust in God.

Faith believes that regardless of what he demands, or what he brings us through ...

God is always good, and his purposes and plans are always blameless.

And when you live by faith you will step into a greater vision of God's love, goodness, kindness, provision, care, and comfort.

Some of the paths he leads us into are difficult...

But they produce a reward of deeper trust in the goodness of God.

And in this particular story Abraham's obedience secured the covenant promises for all his offspring.

Genesis 22:15-18

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."

One man's obedience brought security and blessing to the many.

Abraham acted as a representative for his offspring.

His obedience secured the covenant on their behalf.

Yet, it was not only Abraham who was obedient and submitted.

Isaac was as well.

And this is the pattern that points to a better covenant.

God Secured And Fulfilled A Better Covenant In Jesus

How could an old man past 100 years old secure a young strong man?

Unless Isaac willingly surrendered himself to be bound and placed on the altar.

The Covenant is secured through a faithful father and obedient son.

Jesus is the obedient son ... the only son of God the Father ...

And Jesus became the perfect blameless lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world.

Where Abraham laid the wood on his son to climb the mountain.

Jesus took the cross on himself to climb another hill.

Isaac climbed up on the altar as a sacrifice ... not fully knowing or understanding...

Jesus, on the other hand, chose to be bound to the cross ... knowing that his sacrifice would secure for us an unbreakable covenant.

On the mountain where the Lord provides ... Isaac was saved through God providing a ram to be sacrificed.

On Calvary where the Lord provided for our salvation ...

Jesus was the sacrificial lamb sacrificed in our place.

In this new covenant we are called to walk blameless.

But the difference is ...

Jesus did it for us and is working it out in us.

We live by faith in His finished work, and in the power he gives us by the Holy Spirit to live for him.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise that through Abraham's all the nations of the earth are blessed.

He is the promised son.

And through faith in Him, we too become sons of the promise.

Through the church Jesus is bringing about the blessing of the nations.

We do that through proclaiming salvation from sin, and the inheritance of eternal life, through faith in Him alone.

BAND COME UP

NOT YET FOLLOWER OF JESUS:

- There is nothing you can do ... no sacrifice you can make to be saved.
- No one is blameless.
- Jesus had to die for your sins.
- But you have to believe He is God's only son ...
- Salvation is only through His sacrifice on the cross in your place.

FOLLOWING JESUS:

- Life in Jesus starts in faith and continues by faith.
- **God is asking each of us today ... "What area of your life are you holding back from Him?"**
- By faith, come and ask God for the strength and grace to surrender it to him and live in obedience.

COMMUNION

- We take this in faith that our status with God doesn't rest on our efforts, but on Jesus alone.
- Every time we take communion we are confessing before God and others that we still need Jesus' sacrifice today.
- We must live covered in the grace of God that was accomplished through the finished work of the cross.
- [Body broken / Blood shed]