

Trusting the Lord's Provision No Matter What (Genesis 22:1-14)

Gen 22:1 *Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."* ² *He said, "Take now **your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac**, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."* ³ *So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac **his son**; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.* ⁴ *On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.* ⁵ *Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."* ⁶ *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 the two of them walked on together.* ⁷ *Isaac spoke to Abraham **his father** and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, **my son**." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"* ⁸ *Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, **my son**." So the two of them walked on together.* ⁹ *Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound **his son** Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.* ¹⁰ *Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay **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 stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since **you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me**."* ¹³ *Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering **in the place of his son**.* ¹⁴ *Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide [KJV 'Jehovah-Jireh'], as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."*

Abraham's journey of faith since chapter 12 has had a number of ups and downs, peaks and valleys, but this is the highest point on Mount Moriah. It is one of the high points of the whole OT in revealing the gospel, arguably 2nd only to Isaiah 53 (which it actually has some connections to). In the NT, Paul and James and Hebrews 11 make Genesis 22 the supreme example of true faith that is not without works, and Peter applies it to Jesus (Acts 3:26). Heb. 11:19 says Isaac was received back *as a type*, literally as a parable—it's a picture of another Father (God) and His beloved Son who is our substitute

There's more here than I can cover in our time today, we'll take 2 Sundays at least here, but for today I want us to look at v. 1-14 with a special view to a special time in the Lord's Supper after it. I hope God will increase our understanding of and affection for how the Lord provided for us the Lamb. Think of how God prepared all this as we prepare our hearts for communion

Outline in 3 parts: 1) The Test, 2) The Trust, 3) The Type

1. The Test with Isaac (v. 1-2)
2. The Trust by Abraham (v. 3-5)
3. The Type of Christ (v. 6-14, a type=pre-figuring/picture of Christ)

#1. The Test with Isaac

Genesis 22 has been called 'one of the best-told stories in world literature. But it is more than that. It is the last great test of Abraham's faith, comparable to the original call to leave his home and family (*cf.* v 2 with 12:1). Although we are told it was a test ([in 22:]1), for Abraham God's command was totally real. It was appalling emotionally and theologically, for on Isaac all the promises of blessing depended for fulfilment. Torn between love for his child and obedience to God, Abraham faced agonizing choices. Step by step, faith and hope triumphed over fear and doubt until the knife was raised to slay his son. In this way he showed he was willing to put God's call above every other commitment and emotional attachment ...'¹

The test of v. 1-2 is feelings vs. faith and fearing God (as v. 12 explains). Will he trust and obey, because of reverential fear, a worshipful fear of God no matter what? There's only 1 other passage where the Hebrew words 'test' and 'fear' appear together, and it's in Exodus 20:20. Abraham's descendants are on another mount, not Moriah, Mt. Sinai, when God gave Israel the Ten Commandments to *test* if they'd *fear* God (fear of faith, awe, deep reverence for God that causes them to trust and obey). Abraham, the father of Israel, is the example for Israel in their test to trust and obey God's Torah (Gen-Deut)

There's another classic story of a dad's test of faith/fearing God vs. feelings, in the same timeframe as Genesis, and that's in the book of Job. Dean Orr will be teaching on the story of Job tonight, and I want to encourage all of you to come back to hear that message, because it's important to understand the testing Job went through in chapters 1-2 and his trust in God even when it didn't make sense (much like Abraham's test in this passage). Job didn't know what was going on in heaven, but he knew fire from heaven had come down, a windstorm brought the death of his children, killing them instantly.

The test was if Job would *curse God or fear God* if He took away what was most dear to him (Job 1:9-12). Satan tempted Job to curse God, his wife actually told him to *curse God and die* (2:9), but God gave Job the grace to survive that test and to keep fearing God and worshipping God (1:20, 2:3).

Job loved his children dearly and prayed for them daily long after they left the home (1:5). But he recognized, as painful and sorrowful as it was, that the Lord had the sovereign right to give and the Lord could also take them. but Job resolved by faith to still bless the name of the Lord (1:21). Abraham in Genesis 22 had to come to the same place of faith with his beloved Isaac.

But as Job didn't understand why the Lord had taken away by His hand the lives of his children, Abraham also can't understand why the Lord is asking him to take away the life of his child *by his own hand*. Not fire from heaven or a natural disaster, but fire from Abraham's hand, burning his own natural-born son staked to an altar as a burnt offering? Unfathomable, unimaginable

I think there's been only 1 greater test in human history; we'll look at it later. Our tests may be different than Job's or Abraham's, but times will come that test our faith. Over the casket of a 3-month-old, can I say what Job said? If we receive, maybe not from God but from a doctor, word of imminent death for a beloved, if a child or grand-child is hurt or abused, if a family member dies, if something else breaks our heart, if all you hold dear in life is shaken or even taken away, will you trust the name of the Lord in fear and in faith?

The author of the hymn that we just sang knew what it was like to have his children literally taken away, lost at sea. He wrote as he looked at the ocean that washed away his beloved, that he had a peace attending his way even 'when sorrows like sea billows roll,' to say by faith 'it is well with my soul.'²

We may not feel we could endure something like that or what God asked of Abraham in Genesis or Job in Job 1, but God prepares each of us for testing of faith that produces endurance, as James 1 says. Even though Satan might buffet or trials come, this blest assurance controls. His grace is sufficient in that moment, and the good news of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is that no testing or temptation is given to us beyond what we are able to bear, as God is faithful to enable us. His mercies are new every morning, great is His faithfulness. God had prepared Abraham for 25, 35, 45+ years so he could pass this test.

Notice the emphasis on his son in v. 2: *Take now your son, your only son...*

11x in 11 verses Isaac is called Abraham's own son with personal pronouns. God calls him "your son," Abraham calls him "my son," or the narrator calls him "his son" 11x in 11 verses for emphasis. Then in v. 16-18 another 5x God speaks of "your son/your seed" (i.e., offspring through this son). It's repeated 16x in the verses I read with personal pronouns to make emphatic how personal and relational and even emotional this father-and-son story is:

v. 2: *Take now **your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac,** and go to the land of Moriah, and **offer him** there as a burnt offering ...*

God doesn't ask us to offer the body of our child as a burnt offering today, but the NT does call us to offer our own bodies as a living sacrifice, as our spiritual act of worship in view of God's mercy (Romans 12:1). God calls us to be willing to give up anything, including ourselves, to follow God's call. There's nothing we should withhold from the altar if God asks for it back. As we give financial offerings, our money isn't ours, it's God's. So are kids. God doesn't *owe us* anything. God *owns us* and everything! [say it again]

Allan Ross writes 'God does not ask worshipers to give him that which they do not treasure or that which they no longer care for or need. Rather, God requires that his worshipers offer him the best that they have, even their firstborn. In the law God demanded that the firstborn be given to him (Exod. 22:29); also in the law God made provision for the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13; 34:10). The offering of the best animal of the firstborn (recall Gen. 4:4)...a substitution...in sacrificing the first and best to God, the believing worshiper was demonstrating submission to the will of God. In the teaching of the New Testament it was easy for the apostle to make the comparison...believers [are still] to obey his instructions including sacrificing themselves and their possessions to him ... Christ's requirements for disciples [similarly] allowed no rival loyalties and no holding back.'³

When Jesus called His followers by faith to Him, Jesus said "*he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me*" (Matt. 10:37-38). In Luke 14:26 Jesus called for a love for the Lord so strong, that all other loves are like hate by comparison, the other end of the spectrum. He said unless that is true and unless we carry our cross (i.e. death) we can't be His disciple

Wiersbe writes: 'faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible ... Faith does not demand explanations; faith rests on promises.'⁴

Luther's old hymn says "let goods and kindred [family go], this mortal life also; the body they may kill, God's truth abideth still." Abraham believed if he had to let go his closest kindred, the life also of his son, that even if his body may be killed, God's truth and promise about his son would abide still

Which takes us from the test with Isaac to ... **#2. The Trust by Abraham**

Verse 3 surprises us to read that Abraham trusted and obeyed, quickly and even early the next morning, with not a word recorded of arguing or asking for more information, apparently no deliberation, hesitation, or negotiation. What's the explanation? Abraham believed God's promise about Isaac being the son of promise who kings and nations would come through, so Abraham trusts and obeys and concludes if Isaac will die then God will resurrect him.

In v. 5 in the NKJV Abraham says to the men "*Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.*"

And in Abraham's mind, his son would come back from the dead first. How do we know Abraham's not just saying that so they won't get suspicious? He has lied before. In Gen. 20 he wasn't exactly 'honest Abe,' telling half-truths about his half-sister Sarah. But the only way to make sense in this context of how Abraham could do this is to believe he believed what he said in v. 5. In the context of Gen 18:14 Abraham knew nothing was '*too hard for God.*'

But don't take my word for it. God's word says it: Heb 11:19 and Rom 4:17. Heb 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."* **Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.**

Abraham believed in something that had never existed or happened before, a resurrection from the dead. Romans 4:17 (NKJV) says Abraham '*believed God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;*¹⁸ *who, contrary to hope, in hope believed ...*¹⁹ *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead [or "as good as dead"] (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.*²⁰ *He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,*²¹ *and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*

Abraham knew that his own body had been as good as dead but God made life through his almost dead body in a barren basically dead womb. If God could create life when medically impossible in a 90-year-old woman then God could make her same child alive again when it's medically impossible. Abraham believed God could and would bring him back (v. 5), but even if his son had to die, he would still obey God. His descendants Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego would later declare that they believed God could and would protect them from the fiery furnace, but if not, they'd still obey.

The ancient extrabiblical Jewish writing of Maccabees talks about those 3 young men who submitted to God's will to live or die in the fiery furnace. The writing also compares it to Abraham's submission to God's will as to whether his son would live or die as a fiery burnt offering, and Isaac's own submission. Here's what 7 persecuted brothers said in that Jewish tradition:

‘Let us not be cowardly ... one said, “Courage, brother,” another said, “Bear up nobly,” and another reminded them, “Remember ... the father by whose hand Isaac would have submitted to being slain for the sake of religion.” ... For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac ... will welcome us ... when Isaac saw his father’s hand wielding a knife and descending upon him, he did not cower ... You too must have the same faith in God ...” ... the mother of the seven encouraged and persuaded each of her sons to die rather than violate God's commandments. They knew also that those who die for the sake of God live to God, as do Abraham and Isaac ...”⁵

Another Jewish mother later saw her son die, nails and spears piercing Him through, and Simeon prophesied of her, a sword would pierce her soul, too. Mary felt soul-stabbing pain watching her son Jesus die, seeing the soldiers kill her own son must have pierced her heart emotionally as much as Jesus was pierced in His heart physically. But here Abraham is asked to bring the blade down to pierce the heart of his own son personally. No mother could fathom worse pain than watching her beloved son be murdered like that *by others*, but no mother or father could fathom worse pain than Abraham who is told to *by his own hand* bring the blade down on his own beloved son.

Then again we have to look beyond Mary to the Father of Jesus in heaven. A greater son of Abraham is pictured here, as the first line of NT calls Him (Mt 1:1). A great Father-God hints at His plan for His Son as our substitute.

3rdly and finally: The Type of Christ (v. 6-14)

Heb 11:19 says in the NAS Isaac was “*received back as a type.*” Heb 11:17 also calls Isaac Abraham’s “only begotten son” who he gave up on the altar.

In a greater way *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son* and Hebrews speaks of Jesus on the cross as a greater altar than a tabernacle (13:10). Psalm 2 prophesied the Messiah would be the Son begotten of God, which doesn't mean physical birth there. It's a special unique relationship in the covenant line (Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, leading to Jesus)

Abraham had another son Ishmael through Hagar and other sons after Isaac, so calling Isaac his "only begotten son" means he is the special son relating to the Messiah but it doesn't mean "only son he ever had." And in the same way, the Messiah, being called God's "only begotten Son" means "one of a kind" literally, but it doesn't mean God has no other sons of another kind. It does elevate Jesus as God's Son in a unique special divine sense but all who trust in Jesus are also called and counted God's sons in another real sense.⁶

Something very special is taking place in the special language of Gen 22:2 that later readers and writings picked up on. When Heb 11:19 calls Isaac the "only begotten son," that's a NT equivalent to what he's called in Gen 22:2. Nowhere else in Scripture is one besides Jesus called an *only begotten son*. There is a type of Christ here, Hebrews 11 says, figuratively or pre-figuring:

- v. 1 mentions a test. Jesus was also tested in this same land and prevailed as well. In v. 2 a voice from heaven speaks of Abraham's beloved son. The same voice from heaven in the NT says of Jesus "*This is my beloved Son.*" When v. 2 describes this son as being offered up on a mountain, God's Son in the NT is described as being offered up on a mountain named Calvary.

- The 1st son of Abraham came with a donkey in v. 3. So did the greater son of Abraham in the gospels, coming with a donkey to this very same land.

- v. 4 describes what happened on the 3rd day, what Hebrews described as *Isaac...received back from the dead, figuratively speaking*. It was on the 3rd day that Jesus a greater son of Abraham literally came back from the dead.

- v. 5 anticipates this as an act of worship of father and son together, and the father is confident the son would come back. In the NT Father and Son were together in the ultimate act of worship on the cross and Jesus did come back

- v. 6 describes the wood being placed on the son who carries it to the place where he would die. The later greater son of Abraham also carried the wood of the cross on His back to the place He would die with a far greater weight.

That's not just Christian imagination that sees a connection with Isaac who carries on his back the very wood Isaac's back would later be tied to, like later Jews in Roman times sentenced to death who carried the very wood on their back that they would be tied to for their own crucifixion. As Christians we can see that, but even a pre-Christian Jewish commentary tradition in the *Genesis Rabba* writing of ancient rabbis noted that Isaac here in Genesis 22 was comparable to a condemned man carrying wood for his cross to death!⁷

And as Christians we know Jesus bore not just wood but a world of sinners, the weight of God's infinite wrath on all the sins of all who'd ever believe. The song "How deep the Father's love for us" marvels that "He would give His only Son...behold the Man upon the cross, my sin upon His shoulders."

- In v. 7 Isaac questions his father "my father..." in Hebrew he said "abba." Isaac's descendant Jesus would later question His father with the same word "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36), questioning Him as the time approached for His death as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. But there it doesn't record any response from the Father, just submitting '*not my will but Thine*'

- In v. 8 Father Abraham responds "*God will provide for Himself a lamb for the burnt offering, my son.*" God did provide, and that's how the gospel of John introduces Jesus, not only as the Son of God the Father (1:14, 18), but also the first chapter of his gospel says of Jesus "*behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (1:29). In other words, 'behold Him in faith as the lamb spoken of in the OT in Genesis and Exodus in the Passover and in Isaiah 53 for sinners in the world who trust Him as the Lamb of God'

- In v. 9 Isaac is bound to the wood for execution. No mention of struggle. How old was Isaac? Josephus said he was 25, others say based on chapters 21 and 23, that he could have been as old as 33 (same age as Jesus when He was offered by His Father as the Lamb of God, as Jehovah-Jireh Himself). It's possible Isaac's still a teenager (same word *lad* was used of 17-year-old Ishmael one chapter before and of *young men* who were soldiers in Gen 14)

What we do know is that Abraham asked Isaac to carry the wood, which for whole burnt offerings was a lot of firewood. This isn't kindling or twigs, it's wood that had to be split in v. 3. It's logs, not the job for a little boy to haul up a mountain, but a strong young man could. It's a job for the stronger of the 2 to do, so there's every reason to believe Isaac's stronger than his aging father of 100+ years and could have resisted his dad binding him to the altar

‘Abraham was only able to tie Isaac down to the altar because Isaac was willing to be tied down! And why was Isaac willing? Because his father’s faith in the God of the impossible had rubbed off on him. He believed what his father had said in verse 8: “God will provide for Himself the lamb...”’⁸

The type or foreshadow in Isaac here is fulfilled in the shadow of the cross. Jesus also offered Himself willingly, voluntarily to be bound to a wooden cross, laid down on it, pierced through His hands and feet to keep Him there – but only because He submitted to all that by the command of His Father.

Jesus said in John 10:17-18 that He would let them do that to Him: “*I lay down My life ... No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative ... This commandment I received from My Father.*” Isaiah 53 explained that Messiah would let Himself be led like a lamb to slaughter, not opening His mouth, silently, submissively, sacrificially, substitutionally

- In Gen 22:10 the father’s own hand raises to give his son the death blow. Isaiah 53 prophesied that Messiah-Christ would be “*smitten of God*” and it says “*it pleased the LORD to crush Him*” (v. 4, 10). God crushed His Son! The Father killed His own Son Jesus so Isaac didn’t have to die (or us)! It was not the Jews or Gentiles who ultimately killed Jesus, it was our sin as well, but ultimately it was the hand of God that killed Him (Acts 4:27-28). It was the wrath of God on sin that took His life, not the Roman soldiers.

- In v. 11 God’s messenger stops the execution of Isaac, and the messenger (with a capital M) in the NT announces how descendants of Abraham in the gospel won’t perish but can have eternal life by trusting Christ’s message. Angels announce from heaven in the NT a Savior from eternal execution.

- In v. 12 God sees faith and spares Abraham’s own son he hadn’t withheld, because another who wasn’t spared was a substitute. Listen to Rom. 8:32: God “*did not spare His own Son [Jesus], but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*” Romans 3 says the wages of sin is death, we’re under death’s sentence, but Jesus delivers from it. The sword of God’s judgment is coming, but Jesus steps in-between us. God spared Abraham’s son from death, but because God did not spare His own Son Jesus, God let Him take the death-blow we deserved instead of us, since He gave His Son so we could be His sons, we can trust our Father to freely graciously give us all things we need! *For God so loved that He gave ... and in His love He still gives and provides all our needs as Jehovah-Jireh*

- in v. 13 Jehovah provides a ram caught in a thorn-bush that Abraham sees by grace and sees that God has provided a substitute to sacrifice instead of his son, in the place of his son. The head of a ram was caught in the thorns, perhaps bleeding in the thicket. The head of our Savior was also in thorns, a thick crown with blood running down. The knife once ready to plunge into Isaac is now used to cut Isaac free, and it's used to kill the ram that is tied to the very same place. Isaac would have never forgotten watching dad shed the blood of the substitute ram, realizing it could have been his shed blood.

Jesus said in John 8:56 Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Jesus. I think he saw it as clear here as anywhere, and what a day of rejoicing that must have been! We should rejoice to see this! We're going to sing after communion "my chains are gone, I've been set free - my God my Savior has ransomed me" - and I want you to think of Isaac and the moment when his bonds were gone, when he was set free of death's sentence, through a ransom substitute.

Spurgeon said his words couldn't tell 'how Isaac felt when the cords were unbound, and he saw how narrowly he had escaped from death ... There is not a cord on Isaac as you see him now; he is free. So are you, my friend [if you are in Christ]; there are no bonds on you. Most gratefully can you cry with David, "...*thou hast loosed my bonds.*" As you gather round the Lord's table, do let the thought of substitution be fresh in your mind. He bore [the wrath of God on the cross], that we might never bear the divine wrath; he drank the cup, even to its dregs, that we might never drink a drop of it; in short, he suffered hell's torments, that we might never enter its gates.'⁹

If this doesn't impact your soul, I don't know what can (or if you're saved). If you're not sure if you're saved or if your life is right with the Lord, if you haven't understood this before or have questions, if you're new to this or a visitor or just not sure you fully understand what the elements here are all about or what it means to discern the body rightly, I would ask you at least for today, to not partake of communion. One of us pastor/elders would love to talk to you afterwards (the different men who close out the service). In a few weeks we'll have an opportunity for baptism, and if you haven't trusted and obeyed Jesus in that way since your conversion, you should start there.

[let any of us leaders know if you want to pursue baptism]

Application: 4 words before communion: rejoice, reflect, repent, remember.

- *Rejoice* in the picture of Gen 22, the substitute for death-deserving sinners

Communion is a celebration not just commemoration. We proclaim the Lord's death (1 Cor 11:26) and its forgiveness of sins (cf. Ps 32)

- *Reflect* on where your life is in relation to this test, if you're holding back
1 Cor 11:28 says first "let a man examine himself"
- *Repent* before God where you have sinned (and others if necessary)
1 Cor 11 warns against sins against the body of Christ
- *Remember* Jesus as the Lamb of God, His body and blood given for us
"this is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me."
"This is the covenant in my blood poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." As I pray, prepare your hearts, and men, prepare in back to serve.

¹ *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed, 1994

² Horatio Spafford, "It Is Well With My Soul," 1873.

³ Allan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, p. 402.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Obedient*, p. 108-09.

⁵ 2 Maccabees 13:10-12, 16:20-25 NRSV.

⁶ *The Faith Life Study Bible* explains: "'Begotten' as a translation ... was based on the assumption that *monogenē* comes from two Greek words, *monos* ('alone, only') and the verb *gennaō* ('to beget, bear'). Subsequent research has shown that *monogenē* comes from *monos* and *genē* ('kind'), so the term means 'unique' [or 'one and only of a kind']. This means that Jesus was the unique son of God [only one of that kind, though we can also be sons of God in another lesser sense]. Hebrews 11:17 uses *monogenē* to describe Isaac, demonstrating that the term refers to Isaac's special status, not his birth or birth order.'

⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 114.

⁸ Kurt Strassner, *Opening Up Genesis*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 100.

⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons, Vol. LXII* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1916), 366. Pronouns updated.