

Genesis 22 — Obedience

March 10, 2016

It is great to worship on Palm Sunday. I look forward to next week at the Sami Center for Easter. We will have one worship service at 10:30 a.m. I look forward to seeing you there.

The two big Christian holidays are Christmas and Easter. When I was a child, I loved Christmas because everyone received gifts. Now that I am an adult, I prefer Easter. We celebrate Easter in the spring when everything dead springs back to life after a long winter. Life coming from death is a vivid reminder that Jesus conquered death and came back to life after he was dead for three days. Through our faith in him, when we die our spirits go home to be with Jesus. One day, when Christ returns, God promises to resurrect our dead decayed bodies — just like he did Jesus' body. We too will beat death forever. Ultimately, we will live forever in resurrected bodies on the new creation with heaven and earth combined as one in real physical resurrection bodies that are just like Jesus' resurrection body. Everything will work in the new creation because Obama won't be in charge. Jesus will be in charge. What could be better than that? That is what we celebrate with Easter. That is next week.

This week we continue our study in the book of Genesis. We are in Genesis 22 and looking at the life of Abraham. Last week, we looked at the first 14 verses which talked about Abraham when he was tested by God.

This morning's game plan is a little different. The sermon has three parts. First, we will reread the first 14 verses of Genesis 22 to get everyone on the

same page. Second, the early church saw many parallels between Isaac's near-death experience on Mt. Moriah and Christ's actual death experience on that same mountain 2,000 year later. The early church saw a foreshadowing of Christ's passion week in Genesis 22. I will show you 10 parallels between Isaac's near death in this chapter and Christ's actual death and resurrection. Third, we will finish reading chapter 22 and see what these final verses on Abraham's test teach us about living a life of faith and obedience.

REVIEW — Lessons from Abraham's test

Let's begin with a review of the first 14 verses.

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." Genesis 22:1–2 (ESV)

Abraham loved his son more than he loved his own life. He waited 25 years after God promised him before Isaac came. His son was born when he was 100. God tested Abraham by telling him to take his son's life as a sacrifice. Who do you love more, your son or your God? What do you put first in your life?

All of us face this same test in miniature. Do we obey God's words or do we disobey God's words and put something else first in our lives? Do we do what God tells us to do or what we want to do?

Like Abraham, many of us struggle with loving our children more than God. Sometimes we can tell we love our children too much when our kids live over programmed lives and we are fulfilling our dreams through their lives. This shows up in consistently attending sports instead of church on Sunday. This shows up when you always have time for sports and hobbies with your kids but

you have no time for Bible reading or prayer as a family. Sometimes God may test us. What do we love more, our children or our God?

Another test of your true love happens when you start a dating relationship with someone that doesn't love Jesus. You may get along well as friends but unless he or she loves Jesus more than he or she loves you, he or she will not connect with you on the deepest level. Sometimes you know the person you date is not the right person but you are convinced you can make the relationship work even though your boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't love Jesus. In those situations, you are facing a test, just like Abraham. What is your true love? Your God or your sex drive?

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. Genesis 22:3–8 (ESV)

Last week, we saw Abraham obeyed God's word even when it didn't make sense. Child sacrifice didn't make sense. Abraham was told he would have his descendants through Isaac. How could he kill Isaac but still have descendants by Isaac? Abraham had no idea. Abraham learned his job was to obey God's word even when it looked foolish or inconvenient. Even when he could find a million reasons not to listen to God's word, he was to obey. In the same way, obedience is our job. Taking care of the results of obedience is God's job.

Nobody likes to obey God's words when it seems like obedience will lead to disaster. We don't like to obey God's word when it doesn't appear to make sense. This is why Christians live by faith. Faith means we obey God's words in faith that God will take care of the results.

For example, 2 Corinthians 9 tells us to give to God generously, joyfully and sacrificially. We are to give God what is first and best. When we start to run short on funds at the end of the month will we still give to God what is first and best and trust him to provide for all our needs or will we cut back on our offering rather than trusting God in faith and seeing how he will provide?

Another example comes from the world of business. God calls us to be ruthlessly honest in business. That is hard when your competitors get your business by cutting corners on work, using shoddy material or not being honest with the customer. As Christians, God tells us to be honest and fair in all we do and to not even have a hint of cheating in our lives. Obeying God's Word to be honest in business is especially hard if a business deal goes bad and we lose money to keep our word. Will we trust God to provide when honesty and integrity costs us? God calls us to obey his Word and live in faith, and God will take care of things.

When God tells us to forgive others as we have been forgiven will we obey in faith? That is especially hard when we forgive the same person again and again. Will we obey God's Word in faith even when it seems pointless to keep forgiving and keep reconciling? That is a test, just like Abraham had. Will we obey God's Word when it doesn't seem to make good sense?

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. Genesis 22:9 (ESV)

In these verses we learned about Isaac. While Abraham was strong enough to climb a mountain, Isaac was an NFL lineman. He singlehandedly carried enough wood up the mountain on his back to create a large enough bonfire to burn their offering to ashes. That is a lot of wood. Isaac didn't have to be bound by his father. Isaac could easily have defended himself from his father. The reason Isaac was bound and put on the altar is because he submitted to his father. He submitted to his father's will even when he didn't understand it. Isaac let his father put him on the altar.

In those moments, Isaac submitted to his earthly father just as Abraham, in sacrificing Isaac, was submitting to his heavenly father even though he didn't understand what God was up to. Both of them were submitting to their fathers and obeying even when they didn't understand.

There is great application lessons for us. Even when we don't understand what God is doing in our lives, we submit to him, trust him and obey him. In the same way, teenagers and children submit to your parents, like Isaac submitted to his father, even when you don't understand why they ask you to do certain things. If they are concerned with the way you are spending your time, don't blow them off. Listen to them and submit to their wisdom even if you don't understand their reasons. If they are concerned with your friends or how you spend time with them, don't blow them off. Listen to them and submit to them even if you don't understand their reasons, just like Isaac did for his father.

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 mount of the Lord it shall be provided." Genesis 22:10–14 (ESV)

Last week, we looked at these verses from a special angle. The angle of Isaac. Isaac grew up in Gerar. It was a time of ease and comfort in Abraham's life. Isaac heard stories of God supernaturally coming to his father's rescue in the past but had never seen it for himself. He heard the stories of Abraham's military victories against mighty kings because God came to the rescue but he never experienced it for himself. Isaac heard stories about hearing God's voice but as far as we know Isaac had never heard God's voice. Mt. Moriah was the moment when everything changed.

As far as we know, up to this point in Isaac's life, he only heard about God but he had never seen his father obey God at great personal cost. He heard that God spoke but he never heard God's voice. He heard God comes to the rescue in life but it hadn't happened in his life. Up to this point Isaac hadn't seen his father's faith tested. He hadn't see his father make a hard choice to obey God's word at great personal cost.

After this, Abrahams' faith became part of Isaac's life. This is probably the first time Isaac heard God's voice, and it was when God was calling to his father to save Isaac's life. This is probably the first time Isaac saw his father obeying God's word no matter how deeply it hurt. This is probably the first time Isaac saw

God miraculously come to the rescue by providing a ram caught in the thicket as a substitute for his life. It was in the trial of Mt. Moriah that the faith of a father was passed to a son.

In the same way God sometimes puts us and our families through tests and trials, just like he did Abraham. While trials and testing are always good for us, because they mature our character, we often forget that God puts our families through tests and trials so our children can see how Mom and Dad rely on God in a crisis. Our children watch us go through tests and trials. God has our children walk through family trials with us so the faith of a father and mother is passed into the lives of our children by experience.

Moms and dads, God will bring times of testing and trials into your lives, just like he did to Abraham. They are not just for your good but for the good of your children so they learn about how to rely on God in the midst of a trial by watching and learning from you. That is a recap of last week.

How does Isaac's sacrifice foreshadow Christ's death?

The early church looked at Genesis 22 and saw the sacrifice of Isaac foreshadowing and paralleling what Christ did in Holy Week 2,000 years later. As we prepare for Holy Week, let me show you some of these amazing parallels.

1. **Isaac and Jesus both had births that were promised by God.** Isaac's birth was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12. He waited 25 years for his arrival. Jesus's birth was promised by God in Genesis 3 where God promised that the seed (singular, one person) of the woman would crush the head of Satan. Jesus' birth was promised multiple times throughout the Old Testament. Both of their births were promised before they happened.

2. **Isaac and Jesus both had miraculous conceptions.** Isaac was born to Sarah in her old age after she hit menopause. Jesus was born to Mary in her young age when she was a virgin.
3. **Isaac and Jesus both came from a place of tranquility to a place of brutal sacrifice.** Isaac grew up in Gerar in a time of peace and comfort before he was almost brutally murdered on Mt. Moriah. Jesus came from heaven, a place of peace and comfort, to die an actual brutal death on a cross.
4. **Isaac and Jesus both were sacrificed on Mt. Moriah.** Isaac was to be sacrificed on Mt. Moriah. In 2 Chronicles 3:1 we find this was the location for Solomon's temple. This was the mountain where millions of lambs were killed to cover sin. It was during the Passover at exactly the moment the Passover lamb was slain that Jesus died on a cross in our places for our sins on the very same mountain where Isaac was to die, Mt. Moriah.
5. **Isaac and Jesus both took a three-day journey from death to life.** Abraham and Isaac had a three-day road trip when Isaac was as good as dead before God came to the rescue by providing a substitute at the last moment. Jesus was actually dead three days before he conquered death, coming back to life. Just as Isaac was figuratively brought back to life on the third day, Jesus was literally brought back to life on the third day.
6. **Isaac and Jesus were both escorted to their deaths by two men.** There were two servants with Isaac on his death march. There were two criminals

that accompanied Jesus on his death march. They were hung on his left and right when he was crucified.

7. **Isaac and Jesus both carried the wood of their deaths on their backs.**

For Isaac it was the wood of the burnt offering. For Jesus it was the crossbeam of his cross.

8. **Isaac and Jesus both willingly submitted themselves to the wills of their**

fathers. Isaac willingly let his father bind him and put him on the altar. Jesus willingly let himself be crucified. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed to his father in Luke 22:42, “If you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”

9. **Isaac’s life was saved by God providing a substitute. Jesus came to be**

our substitute. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, in the Gospel of John, he said, “Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” John knew exactly why Jesus came. He came to be the lamb that would die in our places, just as there was a ram who died in Isaac’s place.

10. **Isaac and Jesus both came back from the dead to get their brides.** At

the end of Genesis 22 is a short genealogy of Abraham’s brother, Nahor, whose wife, Milcah, bore him eight sons. Why would a genealogy be at the end of this chapter? It doesn’t fit. Here is one important reason. One of Milcah’s sons named Bethuel fathered a daughter named Rebekah. She is the only daughter mentioned. In Genesis 24, Isaac married Rebekah. God was preparing Isaac’s bride before he met his bride. Isaac was brought back from the dead to be given his bride. In the same way, Jesus rose from the

dead, and the Bible says that when he came back from the dead a bride was prepared for him. The bride of Christ is called the church, that is you and me. Second Corinthians 11:2 says we are the bride of Christ.

I run you through these similarities not just to help you win at Trivia Crack but so you can see how God foreshadowed what Jesus came to do 2,000 years before it happened, through the life of Isaac. The early church found great encouragement that Jesus' death on the cross was not a thwarting of God's plans but it was the completion of God's original plan, a plan God he acted out in miniature through the life of Abraham and Isaac 2,000 years before on the very same mountain.

Let's look at the rest of the chapter and see what we can learn from the second time God speaks.

What does Abraham teach us about faith and obedience?

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. Genesis 22:15–19 (ESV)

I want you to circle the word "because." It shows up two times. Because Abraham obeyed God's word, he was blessed in incredible ways. Let's see what we can learn about faith and obedience for our lives in the final chapters of Abraham's life.

My faith isn't what I believe. It is what I do.

It is easy to tell people we believe in something when we don't need to do anything about it. How many of you believe in Big Foot? How many of you believe in UFOs? It doesn't matter if you believe in them because it doesn't change the way you live. American Christianity is like believing in Big Foot or UFOs. It is easy because believing in Christ if it doesn't change the way you live. The problem is faith that stays in our heads and doesn't come out in our lives will not save anyone.

This is one of the reasons God tested Abraham. Abraham could tell his son he believed in God and would obey his word but it wasn't until Abraham's faith was put to the test that his son knew his faith was real.

Without actions that come from our faith there is no proof or evidence of true faith. Some long-time Christians will freak at me saying this. You will tell me you studied Paul. You will tell me you know we are saved by grace through faith apart from works. There are no actions that save us.

The problem is that after years of studying the Bible we start to read the Bible through the lens of our theology rather than just letting the Bible speak for itself. This often happens when it comes to understanding the relationship between faith and works. Is it true we are saved by grace alone through faith alone? Yes! The Bible is also clear that true faith will be seen in our actions. We aren't saved by our actions, but true faith must be seen in our actions or it isn't saving faith. If your faith is not changing the way you parent, the way you forgive your spouse, the way you do your business, what you look at on television and what you listen to on the radio, then your faith is a sham.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Paul said:

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Romans 3:28 (ESV)

James said:

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. James 2:24 (ESV)

How do we put these together? When Paul talked about works, he was talking about doing good works to gain God's favor. Islam is full of this type of teaching. Islam teaches your good deeds must outweigh your bad deeds. If you yell at your wife before you leave for work you better counterbalance that by extending acts of kindness to others while at work. You hope your good deeds outweigh your bad. Paul said that kind of works-based righteousness does not count. There are not good things we can do to gain God's favor. The Bible says all of our good works are like filthy rags when it comes to trying to earn God's favor. The only way we are saved is by God's grace.

When James talks about works he is not talking about works we do to earn God's favor but how we live because we have God's favor. If God has changed your heart — which is what happens when we come to Christ, there should be a changed life that comes from a changed heart. If there is no change in your life, it is because there was no change in your heart. It doesn't matter what you claim to believe in your heart. How you live reveals the truth about your inner life.

James teaches us that what we believe will come out in our lives, he uses the example of Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac to make his point.

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. James 2:18–24 (ESV)

Do the demons believe Jesus is Lord and king of the universe? Yes! The problem is they don’t live that way. The faith of demons is merely intellectual faith. That is why their faith is not saving faith. Abraham’s faith was shown to be true by obeying God’s word when it was hard. It was his obedience to God’s word that showed his faith was real and proved his faith was saving faith.

Do we obey God perfectly? No. Abraham messed up plenty of times. We saw that. He repented and tried again. When people say they believe in Jesus but they continue to tolerate sin in their lives, or they have no appetite for worship, or no appetite for the Bible, or no appetite to be in church, no appetite for God to be honored through their lives or no willingness to make sacrifices to obey God’s word, it shows us that their faith might not be saving faith. In fact their faith may be demonic faith. What we believe in our hearts will always connect to our lives. It will not connect perfectly but it will connect.

Faith that obeys leaves a family legacy.

...because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you...because you have obeyed my voice. Genesis 22:16–17 (ESV)

This is the first time the word *obey* is used in the Bible. It stresses that obedience to God results in God’s blessings, especially for your children,

grandchildren and those who come after you. Who wants to leave a good legacy for their children? All of us want our children and grandchildren to be blessed because of how we lived. Abraham's obedience to God left a legacy of blessing for his children and the generations that came after them. Look how his obedience to God's word echoed a blessing for generations.

1. His offspring was multiplied.

[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... Genesis 22:17 \(ESV\)](#)

God promised to multiply his offspring like the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore. Abraham went from one offspring, Isaac, eventually to the 12 patriarchs, to the nation of Israel, to all who look to God to be right through faith in Jesus — that is all Christians are called descendants of Abraham.

That is a lot of descendants. The obedience of his life blessed generations.

2. His descendants conquered their enemies.

[And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies... Genesis 22:17 \(ESV\)](#)

Moses wrote the book of Genesis. One of the reasons he wrote the book was so the people of Israel coming out of Egypt would understand their history. It would also explain their future. Part of the blessing of Abraham's obedience is that his offspring would conquer their enemies. If you were an Israelite starting to conquer the Promised Land, it would be helpful to know that you would be successful. One of the reasons for your success was the promise of God's hand of blessing on Abraham's descendants.

While we are not given the same promises as Abraham, the principle holds true. Obeying God's word in our lives will lead to God's hand of

blessing in the lives of our children and grandchildren. The blessing of our obedience will pass into multiple generations of our family tree for generations to come.

Obedying God and forgiving your spouse as Christ forgave you brings blessings to your children. Obedying God's Word and following the roles of a husband and wife in marriage brings blessings to your children and grandchildren. Obedying God's Word and using gracious words in our speech doesn't just bless us, it blesses our children.

3. All the nations of earth were blessed by his obedience.

"...and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." Genesis 22:18 (ESV)

All the nations on earth would be blessed because of Abraham's obedience. It is interesting to notice it speaks of offspring in the singular, not offspring in the plural. There was one particular offspring — one descendant of Abraham — that would bless the world. Look what Paul said about these verses in Genesis:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. Galatians 3:16 (ESV)

This week, when we celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in our places for our sins, remember that one of the reasons we celebrate Christ's coming is that we are the recipients of the blessing of Abraham's obedience.



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