

Genesis 22B (2011)

- As Abraham stands at the top of Mt. Moriah preparing to sacrifice his only son, he must have been warring with his own fears and doubts
 - Did God really expect him to take such an unthinkable step?
 - How will it feel to watch his son die?
 - We remember that the Father in Heaven experienced similar thoughts in some way we can't understand as He put His own Son to death
 - But Abraham is operating in faith, not by sight, and so he prepares to complete the command God has given

[Gen. 22:9](#) 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.

[Gen. 22:10](#) Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

[Gen. 22:11](#) But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

[Gen. 22:12](#) 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."

- Abraham has bound his grown son and placed him on top of the wood on top of the altar
 - And he has stretched out his hand with the knife in order to take his son's life as God has commanded
 - We noted last week that it was remarkable to think his grown son, Isaac, hasn't resisted his father through all of this
 - Even though sooner or later he must have figured out what dad was planning to do
 - Certainly he knew something was amiss when he was bound
 - And though Scripture doesn't record any conversation in the moment, I suspect something was probably said

- So we marvel at Isaac submitting to his father's authority under these circumstances
- Though we typically focus on Abraham's obedience to the Father in Chapter 22, let's not lose sight of Isaac's obedience to his father
 - But in reality, Isaac's obedience is yet another reflection on the faith and strength of Abraham
 - Abraham raised a son who respected his authority so much that he would submit to such a moment
 - And we understand that Isaac's obedience of his father was a reflection of Isaac's understanding that Dad was following the Lord
 - This is how all strong parental-child relationships are formed
 - The obedience of the child should be modeled after the parent's obedience to the Lord
 - Submission to authority and respect for authority is a learned behavior
 - It must be taught and modeled and reinforced
 - And ultimately, it must draw a connection to our relationship to the Lord and our own walk of obedience
 - One of the reasons Scriptures teaches that elders and pastors should have obedient, believing children is for the way it reflects on their own walk of obedience
 - There are no guarantees in life, least of all in raising kids
 - But Scripture tells us to anticipate that obedient, submitted relationships will be contagious
 - If the father is submitted and obedient to the Lord, then the wife will be more likely to follow in submission and obedience to both the Lord and the husband (in that order)
 - If the parents are obedient and submitted to the Lord and demonstrate that pattern to the children, then the children will more likely follow in their footsteps

- Isaac's extraordinary obedience and submission to Abraham was not the result of a moment of clarity
 - It was the result of an upbringing in the family of a man who has taken to heart the words of the Lord back in Chapter 18

Gen. 18:17 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, **Gen. 18:18** since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?"

Gen. 18:19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

- The Lord revealed Himself to Abraham so that Abraham could understand God's expectation for holiness in Abraham's own life
 - And so that Abraham would command his children to keep the way of the Lord
 - Abraham was told to command his children in this respect
 - To make holiness an imperative, a non-negotiable from the earliest years
 - Clearly, he has done this very thing, and Isaac is now demonstrating the effect of that upbringing
- But there is always an element of God's grace in the lives of our children
 - No child is perfect, not even Isaac
 - Later we'll see that Isaac makes some of the same mistakes that Dad made
 - But on our judgment day, our test will not be what our children did with their lives
 - It will be, what did we do to model obedience and submission to the Lord?
 - And did we command them to keep the way of the Lord?
- So just as Abraham is ready to bring the knife against Isaac's throat, then the Lord intervenes
 - The Lord calls Abraham's name from Heaven, repeating it twice

- The repeating of the name marks an emphatic call
- And Abraham's response is equally emphatic...Here I am!
 - We probably can't appreciate how relieved Abraham felt in that moment
 - Faith in God notwithstanding, Abraham must have rejoiced at the prospect of being spared from killing Isaac
- This call is said to come from the Angel of the Lord
 - As we noticed earlier in our study, this is a phrase describing the Second Person of the Godhead; the Son, Jesus Christ
 - Notice in v.12 the Angel of the Lord says you have not withheld your son from "Me" which equates the angel with God
 - Clearly, this person is identifying Himself as the Lord who commanded Abraham to make this sacrifice in the first place
 - So this is the Lord, Christ, speaking to Abraham
- The Lord stops Abraham at the moment of truth, and He orders Abraham not to go through with the sacrifice
 - His reason for stopping the sacrifice is that now the Lord knows that Abraham fears God
 - Since Abraham has come this far and was prepared to sacrifice Isaac
 - This answer raises a few questions for us to consider
 - First, why did the Lord ask for this sacrifice only to have Abraham stop short?
 - First, we remember that this was called a test from the beginning
 - God wasn't seeking a human sacrifice from Abraham
 - In fact, in all history there has only been one time that God has required a human sacrifice: His own Son

- He required the sacrifice of His Son to stand in our place for sin, since only a man can stand in the place of another man
- But sacrificing Isaac wouldn't have accomplished anything for sin
 - Since Isaac had his own sin, his death wouldn't have been an acceptable sacrifice for the sin of Abraham or anyone else
 - He would have been dying only for his own sin
- So God stops the unnecessary sacrifice when it had met its purpose as a test
- That leads us to the second question: how did Abraham pass the test?
 - Since he didn't actually complete the sacrifice, how does the Lord know he would have gone through with it?
 - The Lord says He knew that Abraham fears God
 - The Lord is saying He knew Abraham's heart
 - And Abraham was acting out of fear of the Lord in bringing Isaac to this point
 - Fear of the Lord is a special term in scripture
 - All at once it conveys reverence, obedience and genuine fear
 - Abraham shows his reverence for God by his willingness to give his worship to the Lord
 - And he shows his obedience for God's word in his willingness to come to this place and prepare the sacrifice and draw the knife, just as the Lord instructed
 - But there is also a place for fear in our relationship with the Lord
 - Fear should be a natural and appropriate response as we come to know and follow the Lord
 - Jesus Himself used the word fear in giving us counsel on how we should view the Father

[Luke 12:4](#) "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

[Luke 12:5](#) "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

- Jesus calls upon believers not to fear the world and those enemies of God who might wish to harm us
 - They can do nothing more than harm a body that was destined to die anyway
 - But God is not only the One Who determines the course of our earthly life, but more importantly He holds judgment over our soul
 - On the day of judgment we fall into His hands and are at His mercy

[Heb. 10:30](#) For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

[Heb. 10:31](#) It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- We will have no power, no appeal, no higher authority
 - As believers our judgment will not be for the purpose of condemning us
 - It will be an assessment of our work and an assignment of reward
- But in that moment we will understand fear of the Lord
 - If we marvel at Abraham and wonder if we could have acted with so much faith, perhaps the difference between Abraham and us is that Abraham knew the fear of the Lord while we don't
 - Reverence and obedience and fear combined to produce a proper perspective on the holiness of God
 - And it was that understanding that brought Abraham through this test successfully

[Gen. 22:13](#) 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.

[Gen. 22:14](#) Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

- At this point, Abraham notices that there was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns
 - The Lord never directs Abraham to the ram; Abraham just notices it
 - We understand the ram was a supernatural provision
 - But neither did God direct Abraham to conduct a sacrifice with the ram
 - Nevertheless, Abraham had come to this point to worship God in sacrifice
 - And since the Lord had made the provision available, Abraham gladly used it instead to conduct the sacrifice
 - Notice Abraham declares that this ram would be sacrificed instead of his own son
 - Abraham is saying that Isaac was condemned to die
 - He had walked up that mountain expecting to witness the death of his son
 - But now his son would not have to die
 - Because the Lord had provided an alternative
 - God made another available in Isaac's place so that Isaac wouldn't need to die
 - But it does deeper than that
 - In his heart, Abraham considered Isaac dead
 - He had been preparing for this moment during the three-days walk
 - So that by the time he reached this point, Isaac was as good as dead to Abraham
 - Then suddenly Isaac was spared and returned to Abraham
 - And it could be said that Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, as if he had died and was resurrected

- Here we see another parallel to Christ, another way in which Isaac pictures Christ
 - Jesus was dead and the world thought Him gone for a time
 - But then He returned from the dead
- Hebrews makes this point in describing Isaac as a picture of Christ

[Heb. 11:17](#) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

[Heb. 11:18](#) it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."

[Heb. 11:19](#) He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- Abraham received "him", that is Isaac, back from the dead
- And so Abraham names this mount the place where the Lord made a provision
 - This place is Mt. Moriah
 - It will later become the mountain upon which Solomon will build the temple of God
 - It will become the place of Jerusalem
 - And it will become the mountain upon which the Lord will be crucified
- Indeed, it is the place where the Lord made a provision for all mankind
 - What was a test of personal faith for Abraham became an opportunity for the Lord to create a powerful testimony through Abraham's obedience
 - What testimony will God create through our obedience?
 - Abraham and Isaac gave the world a beautiful example of God at work through Christ to provide a sacrifice in our place

- But that testimony was only possible because Abraham feared the Lord and obeyed His voice

[Gen. 22:15](#) Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, [Gen. 22:16](#) and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, [Gen. 22:17](#) indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

[Gen. 22:18](#) "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

[Gen. 22:19](#) So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

- Here the Lord appears before Abraham for a ninth time and a second time in this same moment
 - And again we see the Angel of the Lord declaring Himself to be God
 - As He swears by Himself, that is by His own name, that He will indeed bless Abraham as the Lord has stated beforehand
 - Each of the major tenets of the Abrahamic covenant are repeated in this promise
 - Including that all nations of the Earth will be blessed through Abraham's seed
 - The promises aren't different than Abraham had heard before, but this is the first time the Lord had sworn the oath to Abraham
 - In ancient times a man might take an oath in the course of entering into a covenant
 - An oath was a solemn binding statement that invoked the name of a greater authority as witness
 - More importantly, by invoking the name of the higher authority, the person taking the oath was saying that if they failed to keep this agreement, they would be at the mercy of the greater
 - The higher authority was usually a king or judge who had the power to condemn the individual to death if they failed to keep their covenant

- So as God makes this oath, He swears by His own name, since there is no higher authority
 - He is saying that God Himself will be bound to put Himself to death to ensure He keep His word to Abraham
 - The writer of Hebrews explains this passage in this way

[Heb. 6:13](#) For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

[Heb. 6:14](#) saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."

[Heb. 6:15](#) And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

[Heb. 6:16](#) For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

[Heb. 6:17](#) In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

[Heb. 6:18](#) so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

- Hebrews explains that when God wanted to leave Abraham with absolute assurance that God would keep His word, He swore by Himself
 - And by this oath God committed to keep His promises to the death
 - The death, of course, was the death God experienced in the Son Jesus
 - Literally, God went to death to ensure He would keep the oath He is swearing here
- And God made such a commitment to Abraham – and the writer of Hebrews adds that it was also for us – so that we would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us
 - Abraham had great reason for hope in the promises of God
 - Those promises had brought him a son and would bring him an even larger family
 - They have given him prosperity in the land, but they will eventually give him an even greater inheritance in the kingdom
 - And they have led to the blessing of others around Abraham, but even now they are blessing far more

people in the world through the opportunity to believe in God's promises

- These were hopes that God delivered to Abraham by way of His promises
 - These hopes were set before Abraham
 - But Abraham had to take hold of them
 - He had to accept that God was trustworthy and that God would keep His word
 - And God delivered an oath so that Abraham would have no more doubts
 - By His obedience to God's command and his willingness to sacrifice his son, Abraham put an end to any doubts concerning his faith in God's word
 - And likewise, God takes an oath to put to end any doubts that He will bring the blessings He has promised
- We are like Abraham in this way
 - We have faith and by that faith we have been saved from the penalty of our sin and with that salvation came hope for resurrection and for blessing in eternity
 - But we have to take hold of that hope
 - That's why the writer says that God used two unchangeable things to give us reason to take refuge
 - And what should be our expected response?
 - We who have taken refuge (been saved) must take hold of the hope that is set before us
 - We take hold of the same hope of reward and blessing knowing God keeps His word
 - Consider the difference between having taken refuge and taking hold of the hope set before us?
 - Taking refuge is accomplished by faith alone

- The hope (of blessing and reward) is only available to those who have taken refuge
- Therefore, taking refuge is independent of the hope that makes it available
 - We can have a hope sitting in front of us but not take hold of it
 - We can live without realizing the hope that is available
 - As a result, it just sits there
- But once it's explained to us and we understand it
 - And then set our mind upon it like Paul running the race, everything in our lives changes
 - We run for that prize and not earthly prizes