

January 19th, 2020 Trusting the Plan and Promise of God Part 2 (Genesis 21, 22, Hebrew 11:17-19, Romans 4:20-22)

Summary of Today's Message

This message continues with the theme of trusting the plan and promise of God! A brief look at some of the struggles Abraham and Sarah had with their trust and faith in God's plan and promise and how we are sometimes plagued with the same struggles and our attempts to get around trusting God's plans can sometimes lead us down difficult paths. A mention of God's judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah and how the pain it caused God's heart to bring judgement on humanities sin, yet again, points to the reason God was so determined to keep His promise and fulfill His plan to provide a way for us to be saved. The remainder of the sermon showcases, through Abraham and Isaac's story, how God would someday provide this salvation through His Son Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God to all who would through faith believe!

Full Sermon Notes

Aren't you glad, God is the way maker!! He makes a way when there is no way! When we can't see the way, we have to remember that He is the Way! We have to remember God has a perspective we simply do not have! We also have to remember that God has made promises to us which He will not break, and He will move Heaven and earth if He has to, in order to make a way for His plans to be accomplished in our lives! In fact, He'll move heaven and earth to get His love to you. Or we might say He'll bring heaven to earth, which He did when He sent Jesus to move a mountain of sin that separated us from the Heavenly Father! Today we're going to get a glimpse of the sacrifice God was willing to make in order to make a way for us! Let's pray!

I want to begin with a question. Do you ever have a difficult time trusting God's plans and promises? Well, you are in good company! Abraham, with his amazing faith, and with all of his experiences of seeing God work in his life, still had difficulty at times. Sarah, his wife, also had trouble trusting the plan and promise of God and we saw that last week with Sarah's plan to have a child through her servant Hagar. And of course this lack of trusting God's plan and promise got Abraham and Sarah into trouble on more than one occasion, and I can say I've been there a time or two myself, okay, maybe more than a time or two. Okay, just a quick practical lesson from Abraham's struggle with trusting the plan and promise of God. Anybody here like practical? If you are a list person and a planner, you probably just gave your approval. But this practical may hurt just a little. List, planning, and being prepared is almost always good, right? Sure it is. But every once in a while our planning and preparation could be a cover up for worry! For some reason Abraham was a bit of a worry wart. You would have read this in your readings for last week, but I want to just show you how hard it was for Abraham and Sarah both, to trust God's plan and promise. You'll see why this is important when we get to our main part of Abraham's story today, but listen to Abraham's plan as he gets close to Egypt...

Gen 12:11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are.

Gen 12:12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live.

Gen 12:13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

Gen 12:14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman.

Gen 12:15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace.

Gen 12:16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.

Gen 12:17 But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.

Gen 12:18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?"

Gen 12:19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!"

Gen 12:20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

God had promised Abraham on at least four occasions he would have a son by Sarah, and that promise should have solidified his confidence in his own personal safety, but it didn't. You'll read about another situation in your readings this coming week in Genesis 20, where Abraham and Sarah once again lie about their relationship. And like father, like son, you'll see Issac, their yet to be born son, do the same thing with his wife Rebekah years later. Not a good thing. When we don't trust God's plan and devise our own, it can lead us down some not so good paths, especially when our plans involve things that disregard some of the basic principles and morals of God's Word! Okay, any practical lessons in any of that? I don't know, you decide! But I will just remind you of two passages in Proverbs, you might have heard me quote one of them before...

Prov 21:2 All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart.

Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

Prov 3:6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Okay, back to our story. Abraham is sitting near the great trees of Mamre at the entrance to his tent and God appears to him. Abraham looks up and sees three men standing nearby. He knows they are from the Lord, so he offers them his hospitality. While he is fellowshiping with them, the visitors ask where Sarah is and this happens...

Gen 18:10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

Gen 18:11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

Gen 18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Gen 18:13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"

Gen 18:14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

Gen 18:15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

Evidently Sarah had only laughed on the inside, so she denied it. The problem is, God knows the heart! He knew she had laughed, but God didn't get mad and rescind His promise, He understood how difficult it was for her to believe and He was merciful.

The conversation with the three visitors didn't end there. God was once again faced with a terrible situation which would require hard decisions on His part and it had to do with the place Abraham's nephew Lot lived. Let's listen in...

Gen 18:16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.

Gen 18:17 Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"

Gen 18:18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.

Gen 18:19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Gen 18:20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous

Gen 18:21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

Gen 18:22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

Gen 18:23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Gen 18:24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?

Gen 18:25 Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Gen 18:26 The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Gen 18:27 Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,

Gen 18:28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?" "If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

This conversation continued, 40? 30? 20? until it came to this...

Gen 18:32 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it."

Have you ever thought about how hard it must be for God when He has to make decisions of judgment based on His justice? Sometimes God, as God, has to make decisions only God can make. Remember, He sees what we cannot. He knows what we do not. He understands ramifications we simply cannot comprehend. But God is not only a God of justice, He is a God of amazing love and He desires to give mercy instead of judgement. When He offers mercy and mercy is rejected He grieves and suffers pain. We talked a little bit last week about the pain of God and the reality of this truth is found throughout Holy Scripture. But God had a plan to deal with man's sin and the need for judgement, although it would include more pain for Him. We know, however, His pain would someday be turned into joy each time a person accepted His plan of salvation.. His plan would ultimately come to fruition through the covenant promise He had made with Abraham! Listen

Gen 21:1 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.

Gen 21:2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

Gen 21:3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

Gen 21:4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him.

Gen 21:5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Gen 21:6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

Gen 21:7 And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Isaac was very much a miracle child, and Issac was a type or a foreshadowing of the Messiah who would someday come, and ultimately fulfill God's covenant of love with human kind! A Messiah whose birth would also be miraculous.

Sarah had said "how can I have a child when I and my master are so old!"

Mary would later say, "how can I have a child when I have not been with a man?"

Why am I comparing Issac with Jesus? There is an amazing connection between our story today and the story of Jesus, and it really showcases how God's covenant

promises in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament! It showcases the lengths God was willing to go so He would not have to continually bring judgement to humankind and could offer His love and mercy instead! God was about to ask Abraham to do something He had never asked anyone to do before and He would never ask anyone again to do again. God had several profound reasons for asking Abraham to do the unthinkable.

Profound Reason #1

God wanted Abraham to trust Him completely through Obedience

Gen 22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

Gen 22:2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Gen 22:3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

Gen 22:4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

Wait! Stop the cameras! Cut, cut, cut! This can't be. God would never ask anyone to do such a thing! Would He? Don't judge God yet. Spoiler Alert!! God didn't let Abraham go through with this request! I know some of you wouldn't be able to concentrate if I made you wait to the end to find that out! God was testing Abraham. You see, nothing should preempt or usurp God's place in our life, not even our children. Sometimes when parents put their children above God it hurts the children more than you can even begin to understand. When parents put the children in first place, they pamper and spoil children and sometimes let the children run the household! This does no good for the children. Anyway, just a little practical aside.

Now, can you imagine how important Isaac was to Abraham and Sarah? He was their only child and a miracle child at that! And Isaac was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Now these questions must be asked. Was God truly first place in Abraham's life? Did Abraham really love God more than he loved Isaac? Did Abraham really trust God? Yes, yes and yes! How do I know this? First He obeyed! Second, he was willing to give up his one and only son to God! Third, his faith had finally gotten to the place where Abraham trusted in the plan and the promise of God 100%! How do I know this? Check out the faith...

Gen 22:5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Abraham didn't know how, but he knew God had made a promise and had done amazing miracles to keep the promise. Somehow, someway, today would be no different! Abraham said...

"We will be back!"

That's amazing trust in God's plan and promise! Abraham had struggled with his faith, but had come to a place of maturity. In fact several of our memory verses for this week point this out. Hebrews 11:17-19...

Heb 11:17 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,

Heb 11:18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Heb 11:19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Abraham didn't understand what God had asked, but he knew God must have a reason. And this leads us to the second profound reason God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

Profound Reason #2

God did not condone human sacrifice!

"But wait, God asked Abraham to do this? I don't understand." Let me explain. There were child sacrifices going on at the time of Abraham in pagan rituals. God would use this story to show all of Israel and the world that human sacrifice was not a valid way to worship Him. I believe there are some things God would only ask one time in history, and never again. This is one of those. And remember God didn't allow Abraham to go through with it! God was going to use this one incident to teach many lessons, and one of them was that He did not condone human sacrifice. Listen to these words of Scripture...

Deuteronomy 12:31 You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

And again God says in Jeremiah 32:35

Jeremiah 32:35 They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.

In other words, God had never given a command to His people to literally sacrifice their children to Him as an act of worship. The one time He asked someone to be willing to do this, He did not let them go through with it! We should all be willing to dedicate our children to the Lord and give them to the Lord, but not as a human sacrifice! In other words, if God calls one of your children to be a missionary to a foreign country, then be willing to give them up to God as a living sacrifice! And know that God will take care of

them and use them in mighty ways. Holding them back from God's will and plans for their lives would only hurt them.

Now this third profound reason God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is powerful when it comes to seeing God's covenant promises in Genesis all the way down to the New Covenant in the New Testament.

Profound Reason #3

God was using Abraham and Isaac to point to a future sacrifice only He could make!

The only other time there would be a sanctioned sacrifice of a human life would be when God's One and Only Son would give His life on the Cross for the world! Did you notice Scripture keeps pointing out Isaac was Abraham's one and only son?

Gen. 22:2a Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love..."

John 3:16 says...

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

And have you ever noticed Genesis 22:6?

Gen. 22:6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac...

Isaac carried the very wood that would be used for the sacrifice. What about Jesus?

John 19:16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

John 19:17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

John 19:18 Here they crucified him, and with him two others —one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Now we know from the other Gospels that at one point Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross, but Jesus had carried the wooden Cross on which He would be sacrificed!

Once Isaac is loaded up with the wood, he asked the toughest question to his father. Isaac was young, but he was perceptive...

Gen. 22:7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Gen. 22:8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Something amazing happened when Abraham was about to do the deed...

Gen. 22:9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Gen. 22:10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Gen. 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

Gen. 22:12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son. "

Gen. 22:13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Gen. 22:14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided. "

Someone might be asking right now, "Does this have any practical application to my life?" More than you could possibly imagine. The details of this message show how God has been pursuing a relationship with you from the beginning of time. Before you were ever born, God was working His plan to provide a way for you. Before you were ever born, God made an unthinkable and very painful sacrifice for you. God provided a sacrifice for Abraham and Isaac with a ram caught in the bushes, but God has provided for your salvation, your redemption, your judgement, and your punishment with a Lamb, The Lamb of God, Jesus! God had inspired Abraham to tell Isaac, "God will provide a lamb!" A foreshadowing or prophesy pointing to Jesus the Messiah!

Isa 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus said "It is finished" just before He died on the Cross? It was because He had finished His work of providing for our salvation, our redemption, our restoration, our forgiveness, our eternity! God cared so much for you He worked even in the smallest details of ancient prophecy to show you the depth of His love! If God worked so hard back then to set the stage for our salvation don't you think He desires to help you with the trials, troubles, and temptations of your life today? Your answer should be a resounding Yes! The details of your life are very important to God! But remember, you have to decide whether or not you will, by faith, invite Him to be your Savior, and then allow Him to be your Lord on a daily basis!

Rom 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

Rom 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom 3:24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Rom 3:25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood...

Listen to the closing of our story and you'll see that Jesus was a part of the promise of God made to Abraham...

Genesis 22:15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time

Genesis 22:16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

Genesis 22:17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

Genesis 22:18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Here's the description of this New Testament fulfillment in Galatians 3:8-14 (NIV)...

Galatians 3:8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."

Galatians 3:9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

And then down in verse 13...

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Galatians 3:14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Let's pray!