

Part 3: “Encountering God’s Promise”

Genesis 22:1-18

Introduction

God creates contradictory trials as a part of fulfilling His promises to us. In Genesis 22:1-18, God tested Abraham and told him to take his son, Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice – effectively telling Abraham to kill his own son. God’s instruction to Abraham presented various contradictions due to what appeared to be conflicting truths. There was a theological conflict: Isaac was the son of promise (Genesis 21:1-3) and, through him, Abraham was supposed to be a father of many nations (Genesis 17:5). This also presented a Biblical conflict: God condemns murder (Exodus 20:13), yet, He told Moses to kill his son. The contradictions created an emotional and familial conflict as well: Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah; if Abraham killed his son he wouldn’t be protecting Isaac’s physical life or his wife’s emotional well-being. The story of Abraham and Isaac, even with all of its conflicts, presents an opportunity for the believer to learn how to handle contradictory circumstances in their own lives.

Abraham’s example demonstrates the perspective we should have when things just aren’t making sense or when things don’t line up with the truth of God’s Word. First, we must be willing to obey God even when we don’t understand Him. Abraham chose to obey God immediately (Genesis 22:3) even when God’s instruction didn’t seem to make sense. In the same way, we have to obey when we lack clarity about God’s purposes, His plans, or the outcome of our obedience. We also have to remember what God has done in the past. Abraham believed God could be trusted to solve the problem he faced. He remembered that God had already proven Himself capable: in Sarah’s old age God made it possible for her to bear a child. Another perspective that will help us in times of crisis is to trust that God transcends our crisis (Genesis 22:8). The problems that God allows, He also has the power to solve. We just have to remember to look toward the spiritual when the physical isn’t making sense. Finally, we must be willing to sacrifice what is dearest to us – the most important things in our lives -- to get the promises of God if that is what He asks of us.

God’s provisions and promises are tied to His experience of our commitment to Him. It was only when Abraham had walked in full obedience that God declared, “...now I know” (Genesis 22:12). God has prepared His answers in advance just like the ram was prepared in advance as a replacement for Isaac. The ram was already in the thicket ready to appear at God’s ordained timing. The same is true for us. God is faithful to provide, He is faithful to His Word, and He desires that we are faithful in our obedience to Him.

Getting Started

1. It’s the beginning of a new year. What goals have you set for 2018? Spend some time catching up with your group.
2. The story of Abraham and Isaac is a story many Christians have heard before. What did you learn from this week’s sermon that you may not have known?

Let’s Get Personal

1. What promises of God are you waiting for Him to fulfill in your life?
2. Have you ever felt like the situation that God allowed or His instructions to you didn’t make any sense? Tell your group about a time when God called you to act on faith despite conflicts.
3. What acts of faith is God waiting for *you* to complete in the midst of your contradictory crisis? What thing in your life is God waiting for you to hold up as a burnt offering, ready to give it all?

Take the Next Step

1. Abraham was faithful to obey *completely*. In what area of your life have you been partially obedient, instead of fully obedient?
2. How does this message effect how you will move toward complete obedience in your Christian life?
3. Want to go deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Heb. 6:13-18; Heb. 11:17-19; James 2:21-23; John 8:56; and Gen. 9:6.

Renew Your Mind

“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead...” James 2:17
