

Will You Surrender All?

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening everyone and welcome. As it's already been said, my name is Alster. I have the privilege of being on staff here and the privilege of opening Genesis 22 for us this evening. But as we start, let me ask us a question. Have you ever been on a long journey, which is both easy and difficult?

Well, nearly five years ago when my wife and I got married, on our honeymoon, we went on what we thought would be a quick hike. Now, this was in Austria. No hike is quick in Austria.

And after six hours of ups and downs, of smooth wooden floors, paths surrounded by beautiful trees, and of steep, steep, rocky paths where you would lose your footing, we managed to make it all the way to the top of a 2,023 meters above sea level mountain.

It was a pretty difficult hike, especially for an unfit person like I was and am. But finally, we reached the top. And it all was worth it.

[1 : 13] The journey, regardless of how difficult it was, was totally worth the amazing view that we saw. And as we come to this final installment of the series of the life of Abraham, I think we can probably agree that it's been a pretty difficult journey.

We have seen ups and downs. It's almost as if Abraham's life is a steep mountain climb. He's gone on a steep and difficult path.

But on a hike along the way, there was little breaks and gaps in the trees. And from those gaps, you can see, you could see amazing views like this one.

And the same has happened with Abraham. As he's been journeying through this difficult path of life, he's seen little glimpses of hope. He's seen amazing promises of God.

As he went through the difficulty of waiting 25 years for the birth of his son Isaac. As he walked away from his father's house and left the life that he knew behind him because God had told him to.

[2 : 24] We've seen him rejoice and live obediently. And we've seen him downcast and live in disobedience. But one of the constants throughout this whole narrative of the life of Abraham has been God.

And the big truth that runs throughout this whole story is that God is faithful. Time and time again, we have seen the faithfulness of God.

The God who created the world with his words. The God who sustains the very universe that we live in. The God who knows everyone who has ever lived and will ever live.

Decided to reveal himself to this man, Abraham. Was God faithful? Absolutely. He certainly was. And since Genesis 12, Abraham has obeyed.

He's disobeyed. He's been a man of faith and a man of failings. Even last week, we saw how he fell into the same old sin and lied about the identity of his wife to save his own skin.

[3 : 34] Genesis 12, we see the amazing promises of God. And they've come up again and again in these chapters. Abraham is to be the father of a great nation.

But one problem stood in the way. Sarah was barren. And then last week in Genesis 21, we saw God work a miracle. And Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

And then we turn to Genesis 22. And we see Abraham going through the ultimate test. And the question that I think runs through this passage in Genesis 22 and the whole of Abraham's life really is this question.

Abraham, will you surrender? Abraham, will you listen to the will of God? Will you act on God's revealed will?

Will you surrender all and follow God? So that's the question I want us to have in the back of our minds this evening as we travel through this passage, which is difficult, but which is wonderful.

[4 : 39] In Genesis 22, we see God telling Abraham to do something difficult. And as I've been thinking about this this week, I wondered how I would respond if I was asked to surrender all in his situation.

And I'll be honest. And in his particular situation, I think I'd struggle. In fact, I know I'd struggle. But thankfully, God gives his amazing grace and accepts even a fallen heart like mine.

So not only does this passage encourage us to think about this question in light of Abraham's life, but I want us to think about it for ourselves as well.

Will we surrender all? Will you surrender all to God? So let's dive into Genesis 22 and we'll see three things.

A difficult request from God, a devout response of Abraham and a definitive reward from God. So the first thing we see is a difficult request from God in verses one and two, a difficult request from God.

[5 : 51] Now, right at the outset of this passage, you'll see in verse one that we have an insight that Abraham didn't have. We're told that God was testing Abraham.

Abraham had no idea that what God is about to tell him is a test. This test will prove whether or not Abraham's faith in God is genuine.

Now, it is important to know that God is not enticing Abraham to sin. But instead, he is giving him the opportunity to prove his allegiance to God.

This is an opportunity for Abraham to show God the lengths that his obedience will take him. And to show whether or not he has true confidence in God. God calls Abraham.

And the first words you hear from Abraham's mouth are a declaration that he is ready to listen. He is ready to act on the words that God is going to say to him.

[6 : 51] Do you see that in verse one? Here I am. Lord, use me. I am ready to obey you. And then in verse two, we have the request.

But this isn't really a request. It's actually more of a command. God is telling Abraham what he is going to do. Just like in Genesis 12, where God told Abraham to leave his father's house.

Read verse two with me. Then God said, take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the region of Moriah.

Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you. Can you imagine how Abraham is feeling with every single word that God says in that verse?

With every single word, it's as if a dagger is being pushed into his heart further and further. Can you imagine his pain? His confusion?

[8 : 01] How can God tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? This is the child that he's been waiting for for 25 years since God promised him a son.

This is the God, this is the son, sorry, through whom the promises of Genesis 12 will all come true. And now you want me to sacrifice him?

Why? Why God? Isn't that what you'd expect Abraham to say? And even worse, not only will Isaac or would Isaac be taken away from him, but Abraham is told that it is his hand that will take his own son's life.

Abraham wouldn't be handing his son over to another person, but it is his knife that will take his son's life. What a painful and confusing request.

God is telling Abraham to go to an unknown location to do something that is unthinkable for every single parent in this world. And the big question as we look at this command from God is, why?

[9 : 15] Why would God ask such a thing? And the answer that this passage would encourage us to conclude is that this command was given so that Abraham could prove his faith to God.

Now God knew Abraham had faith, and we've seen that as we've looked through his life on Sunday evenings. But now Abraham's faith is to be backed up by his actions.

Abraham's actions will prove that his faith is real. He isn't to have this attitude of let's let go and let God know. Abraham is to have an attitude of let's trust God and get going.

Now this request from God to Abraham is unique to him and to his particular situation. God is not giving us, thankfully, the same command as he gives Abraham in this passage.

But let me ask us a question. Something I struggled with this week. What are we holding back from God? Whether you've been a Christian for years, for months or for days, what are you holding back from God?

[10:25] As I was preparing this week, I thought to myself, can I really stand before God and say, here I am? Or am I more likely to say, God, I'm here, but look at all this nice stuff you can have.

Take that, but please don't touch this bit. That's mine. I've heard someone describe it as when you become a Christian, you invite God to move into your life and you treat it like a house.

You give him the grand tour. God, look at all these amazing, marvelous things you can have. You can have this room and this room. But when God asks about that little door at the back of the house that you've kept locked and hasn't seen the light of day for years, no, God, you don't really want that bit, do you?

I need that bit. I'm not ready to give it up. That's still mine. Is that how we treat God? Or will you surrender all? Are we willing to surrender our actions to God, to let his will for our lives guide us and take us where he wants us to go?

We cannot be called Christians and not act upon our faith. We cannot let go and let God. We are to trust God and get going. We have to act.

[11:43] We have to act. Will we surrender all? You become stronger only when you become weaker.

When you surrender your will to God, you discover the resources to do exactly what God has asked you to do. God always has and always will look for men and women who say to him, God, I trust you so much.

God, I trust you so much. I'm all in. I want your way to be my way. I am willing to live by faith. And God is so gracious to us that even when we are stubborn, he is patient.

But we are called to surrender all to God. Will you surrender all? The next thing that we see in this passage is a devout response of Abraham.

Verses 3 to 12, a devout response of Abraham. How would you expect Abraham to respond to this command? This confusing and this painful command?

[12:50] Put yourself in his shoes for a moment. Feel his pain and his confusion as God tells him to sacrifice his own son. How does he respond?

Look at verse 3. Early the next morning, Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. What? If you were to sit down with Abraham and ask him about this whole thing, he might say, yes, I was confused.

I was afraid as every single parent would be. So why, Abraham? Why did you obey this command? And he might look you square in the eye and say, because I have confidence in my God.

I know the God who called me from my father's home and sent me to a land promised to me. I know that God continues to bless me despite my shortcomings.

I obeyed because I know that the promises of God will not be thwarted. I obeyed because I know the one who commanded me. I know my God, Abraham might say.

[14:04] As I was reading this passage, I was stuck by the time frame of it all. It happens very, very quickly. It doesn't happen quickly, sorry.

God didn't command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac there and then in the moment. But Abraham is to travel to a specific place three days journey away.

And you see that in verse four. That means that Abraham would have time to think, time to doubt.

Even as he sat and he chopped the wood, thinking all the time that the twigs he held in his hand, in a few days his son would be lying on them.

As he takes one step after the other towards this place that God has shown him, every step is closer to the moment where he will have to kill his son.

But in verse five, you see a hint of Abraham's confidence that God will come through. Abraham said to his servants, Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there.

[15:13] We will worship. And then we will come back to you. We will worship. And we will come back to you.

These are not empty words. Nor are they the hopeful words of a distraught father. These are the words of a man who is confident in God.

That God will fulfill his covenant promises through Isaac as he said he would. Hebrews 11 verses 17 to 19 shed some light on Abraham's thinking here.

And the words are on the screen. By faith, Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced 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.

This is the important part. Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead. Abraham was so confident in God that even if he did have to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering, that God would keep his covenant promises and raise Isaac from the dead and return Isaac to him.

[16:36] And you see his confidence. We will go and worship, Abraham says to his servants, but both of us will return to you. And Abraham is walking with Isaac in full expectation that he's going to have to kill his son.

And look at the painful details in verse 6. Isaac carries the wood and Abraham carries the blade and the fire. Isaac is carrying the wood that he will be lying on in just a few verses.

He carries a heavy burden. And Abraham carries the two smaller things, fire and the knife. But even though these are small items, I can imagine they felt as lead in his hands.

Abraham and Isaac both have a heavy burden to bear, but they are going together. As they walk, Isaac is innocently obeying his earthly father.

And Abraham, with every step, more and more agony, yet confident in his God, is obeying his heavenly father. Imagine the heaviness over that conversation as they walked towards the mountain.

[17:57] Abraham probably wasn't in much of a talking mood. And Isaac, possibly starting to get a little bit suspicious, asked, Dad, where's the lamb? And again, you see Abraham's confidence.

God will provide the lamb. Now, we don't know whether the lamb Abraham is referring to is an actual lamb, or if he's thinking about his son.

Abraham might not even know at this point. But it is his confidence that is important. It is firmly grounded in the faithful covenant-keeping God that he serves.

Ask any author what the key to building a good story is. And they will tell you that you have to have a captivating plot.

You have to have a twist that nobody saw coming, and a disaster which could eliminate one of the main characters. That is the plot line that runs through roughly 90% of the action movies and series that you see on TV today.

[19:02] But this plot line did not originate from Netflix or HBO or Amazon Prime, but from the creator of this world. As God is directing the writer of Genesis to write down this story, you can see the tension building, can't you?

With every little detail it builds. This is the part of the movie where the dramatic music kicks in. You see Abraham building the altar.

The camera focuses in on Isaac, and in the background you see Abraham laying the wood on the altar. Abraham lays down his son, and he reaches for the knife.

And at this point the music is so loud, and you're hiding behind your pillow. But notice the details that the author doesn't say. There is no mention of an objection from Isaac.

I mean, he has his own two feet. He walked to the mountain. Why hasn't he done a runner? Because he is being obedient. Isn't that amazing?

[20:10] This obedience must have come from a trust in his father, the one who he has seen live obediently before God. His obedience must come from a confidence that Isaac has in God.

Abraham probably told Isaac the promises that God had given him as Isaac was growing up. How Isaac would be the first fruit of these covenant promises. And Isaac obediently lies on the wood awaiting his death.

And as the knife is raised in the air, as this father full of confusion and pain and confidence is just about to lower the knife and take his son's life, as you see this mountain range of tension which has been building up, you hear a voice of deliverance.

Abraham. Abraham. Here I am, he replied. The same response of obedience and willingness to act according to the will of God.

Tell me what to do, Lord. I am here waiting your command. Do not harm the boy. Now I know that you fear God because you were willing to give him up.

[21:27] Abraham's faith is not only being approved by God in these verses, but his actions are being applauded by God. Now I know that you fear God.

This was the ultimate example of faith and it was counted to him as righteousness. His faith is backed up by his actions. Do not harm the boy.

Imagine the relief, both of Abraham and of Isaac. We see a devout response of Abraham and you see his obedience obedience and confidence in God.

Do we live lives which ooze obedience to God because we are confident in who he is? Here we see a man who was willing to give up everything that he holds dear, everything that he loves for his relationship with God.

Do I care that much about my relationship with God? Do we care that much about our relationship with God?

[22 : 38] Are we willing to surrender all? what good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul?

Abraham is confident that his soul is kept in the hands of the living, faithful, covenant-keeping God because he knows who he is and he trusts him and obeys.

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul? Will you surrender all to God? Abraham's response to God's command is almost the pinnacle of confidence in God and obedience to his will.

And the final thing that we see in this passage is how God responds. A definitive reward from God verses 13 to 24. A definitive reward from God.

God sees Abraham's obedience and he provides a substitute. A ram is caught in a thicket and Abraham takes it and sacrifices it. Notice those words.

[23 : 43] Instead of his son. A substitute is given. And now both Abraham and Isaac can worship God together. God saw Abraham's faith and God provided.

In verses 15 to 18 we see a reiteration of the promises that God has given Abraham that would be fulfilled through his son Isaac. And in verse 16 we see God swearing by himself.

This is the only time in the book of Genesis that God does this. Why? Well, first of all there is no one greater than himself by whom God could swear.

God is swearing to bless and multiply Abraham's offspring Abraham's seed. His descendants will be as numerous as the stars in heaven and as the sand on the seashore.

And by swearing by himself God is showing the seriousness and permanence of his promise. He's saying I'm putting my name on the line to show you how serious I am.

[24 : 56] God is faithful and he will not go back on his promises. He will provide and he has provided. But look at verse 17 with me. It says your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.

Or if you have an ESV in front of you it will say and your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies and your offspring shall all and in your offspring shall all the nations of earth be blessed.

Now why am I bringing this verse to your attention? Well because the Hebrew word that is used there for their or his the highlighted red word on the screen.

This word can be both plural and singular. The writer of Genesis wants us to see that this verse has a specific thing to say about Isaac but that this verse also refers to another seed of Abraham.

In this whole narrative of Genesis 22 Isaac is a foreshadow of another seed of Abraham. And this is the amazing thing about the Bible.

[26 : 10] We're not just reading about the life of Abraham here but this promise deals with stuff that's already happened and stuff that is to come in the future.

In Genesis 3 verse 15 we see a promise that Eve's seed will come and defeat Satan. in Genesis 22 17 we see a promise that Abraham's seed will triumph over his enemies.

And in Luke 23 we read it was about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon for the sun stopped shining and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

Jesus called out with a loud voice Father into your hands I commit my spirit. and when he said this he breathed his last. There we see the two seeds of Abraham.

Now think of some of the comparisons between the two. Isaac is obediently following and trusting his father. Jesus was sent into this world by his father and our God.

[27 : 21] Isaac carries the wood which he will be laid on. Jesus carried his cross to death. Isaac obediently awaits his own death so that he is obedient to God's will.

Jesus went to the cross surrendering all to make reconciliation with God possible. Isaac is said to rule over his enemies and at the cross the son of God Jesus Christ defeated humanity's worst enemies sin and death.

But also notice the differences. In Isaac's case a ram is offered as a sacrifice meaning that he didn't die but the ram did and they worshipped God.

Well the difference is that the son of God Jesus Christ himself was the substitute. How? Well because the punishment that he bore on the cross was my punishment to bear. It was your punishment to bear. As the song puts it behold the man upon the cross my sin upon his shoulders ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.

[28 : 39] It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished.

Jesus was our substitute sent by God to take the punishment on the cross to bear the wrath of God to be the sacrificial lamb that took our place and Jesus death is available for all those who would have faith in him.

Jesus is the perfect sacrifice who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus is the fulfillment of these covenant promises. He is the one who is the blessing to the whole world.

How? Well because his sacrifice is available to all people in all the world from every tribe every tongue and every nation he calls people to repent to believe in him and to worship him in perfect relationship with God which is only made possible through Jesus Christ the lamb that was slain. So whether you've been a Christian for years or you've never heard this before I want to ask you the same question as we draw to a close this evening. Will you surrender all?

[30 : 04] You might be asking the question why would I surrender all to a person I can't see? Why would I surrender all to a person who died 2000 years ago on a cross?

Well because Jesus is now in heaven. He is our strong and perfect plea. He is our great high priest whose name is love. Whoever lives and pleads for us.

Why is Jesus deserving of our worship? Well because Jesus is the sinless saviour and he died so that our sinful soul can be counted free.

And God looks on Jesus' sacrifice and pardons us of our sins. Why is Jesus the true hope of our lives? Which should give us more than enough reason to surrender all to him.

Because he is the risen lamb. He is our perfect spotless righteousness. The unchangeable king of glory. And as Christians we have a certain hope.

[31 : 11] we can know for sure that our hearts are hidden with him on high. So is Jesus worth surrendering all for? Abraham cries out yes.

The Bible tells us yes. Church history is filled with people who with their very last breath on earth said yes. hearts. So the question is will we surrender all?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we come before you this evening and we acknowledge that the only reason we can stand before you is because of your son Jesus Christ.

who tore the curtain who made it possible for us to come before you and worship you. Father we thank you that he took our pain that he bore your wrath for us.

And Lord in light of that we pray that you would help us live obediently that we would act obediently because we are confident in who you are.

[32 : 38] And Lord that we would surrender all to you. We ask this knowing that you help us and in the strong precious name of your son Jesus Christ.

Amen. We serve our helps and inspire us to cheer how our