

The Lord Will Provide

Genesis 22

Abraham has come so far. From Ur, from Haran, from famine in the land, from Egypt, from giving his wife to the Philistine king, to finally seeing his son. He and Sarah waited 25 years for Isaac, and finally they are hilariously comforted, settled, and protected. And then this. This is the most famous story about Abraham, what rabbis called the Aqueda (*binding*), because of its superior craft and gripping horror. The test is unthinkable and resolution so beautiful that it cements in our minds. But the point of the story is bigger than the two coming down the mountain: the real horror and aching beauty of Calvary, God's sacrifice of His Son for our sins.

The Test

Ishmael mocked Isaac, coveting God's blessing and ignoring his own (21:9). How would Abraham respond to God taking what is rightfully his? Couldn't He leave Isaac alone, the joy of their old age? It's almost too much for us so Moses says immediately it's a test (v1). We know what Abraham doesn't, something we need to remember in our own stories—we don't know what's going on. But being ignorant is different than unprepared, and Abraham is ready: "Here I am" (vv1, 7, 11). Obedience doesn't require superpowers, just a will. Even to say "obedience" rubs our flesh the wrong way, and the temptation is to slander God or others as uncaring or unknowing. He gently approaches and says, "Please take your son, the only one from you, whom you love, Isaac, and go" (v2). God loves Isaac, and knows Abraham does too, and calls him kindly but firmly. God is testing Abraham so that he can withstand sin, the opposite of tempting him in order to make him sin (Ex. 20:20; Dt. 8:2; Matt. 4:3; Col. 3:21). Abraham rises early, ready to go, but split the wood last (v3). He had a three-day journey and long approach to think through this living nightmare (v4). What did he think about?

The Triumph

Victory comes before the knife is in the air. Abraham boldly states, "the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you" (v5). Hebrews tells us Abraham offered him up "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense" (11:19). God has always been the God of resurrection, and His people have believed it. Abraham lays the wood on Isaac, answers him about the lack of a lamb to sacrifice, binds him, and raises the knife (vv6-10). Only when his hand is up does the Angel of the Lord stop him (v11). Now He knows Abraham fears the Lord, and now Abraham knows it. Obviously Jesus didn't misplace His omniscience. In order for Abraham to have feared the Lord to this extent, he had to go through it. Nothing about this fear is craven or servile; it's bold and otherwise fearless. The thing Abraham feared losing is restored, and he names the place Yahweh-Yirah, Yahweh-Will-Provide. He feared God more than losing Isaac, knowing God would do right. God did more than right. He gives the greatest assurance He can by swearing upon Himself that through this seed all the nations of earth will be blessed (vv16-18; cf. Heb. 6:13-18). God gave him not just what he wanted, but unaccountably more.

The Type

We are so relieved when Isaac's throat doesn't get cut, but the relief is temporary. This living parable gives us just a glimpse of what the love of the Father and Son is like as "son" is repeated ten times and they intimately interact with each other saying "my father", "my son" (vv 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16; v7). No ram would suffice for our sins, so the knife fell on Jesus, and the Father endured sorrow that we can't imagine. This is what assures us that God is for us: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). God has already given us the most valuable thing to ever exist, so we know He will see us through. Jesus is the ultimate thing Yahweh Yirah provided. He did it because He loves us, and like Abraham, we thrive when we're ready to follow Him no matter what.

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Genesis 22:1-2, 5-6, 9-14

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 Then He said, "Take now 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." 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 69 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." 12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." 13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

1. What does God ask Abraham to do, and why does He ask him to do this (verse 1)?
2. When God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham would be very confused since God gave him Isaac in the first place. We don't always understand why God asks us to do things. Should we do them anyway? Can you think of something you had to do that was hard?
3. What did Abraham demonstrate by being willing to offer Isaac (verse 12)?
4. This story is a picture of what God the Father would do with His Son, offering Him to be crucified in order that our sins would be forgiven. That's how much God loves you! Draw a picture of Abraham getting the ram from the thicket to offer to the Lord.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."—Genesis 22:12