

Genesis 22 1-12 - Not By Choice

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[0 : 00] Father, how can we not help but think that you did not withhold your only Son from us, Lord? You gave him for us. You've given your only begotten Son that whosoever would believe in him would not perish, would not go into an eternity separated from you, would not fear death, would not fear this life, but would have everlasting life.

So we thank you, Lord, for that. And Lord, as we look at this beautiful picture that you, 700-some years before the Messiah came, this beautiful picture you laid out for us, help us to see your heart. Lord, help us to reflect upon our lives. And Lord, may we grow closer to you and to the reality of the hope that we have in Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen. All right, so I guess my title for today, I had a hard time coming up with one.

Not by choice. There's changes coming. There's a direction coming. There's something up ahead. It's not by choice. It's not by my choice. It's not by Abraham's choice, this thing that's about to come. It's not something he would have necessarily chosen. So at the end of chapter 22, if you look at verse 34, it says, And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

[1 : 21] And then verse 1 of chapter 22. I'm sorry, that was chapter 21. The end of chapter 21 in verse 34. And then the beginning of chapter 22, verse 1 says, And it came to pass after these things.

So there's a space of time here. We have, at the end of chapter 21, he's been sojourning there many days. And now there's another space of time. The question we're going to want to know is, how old is Isaac?

Right? People ask that. In Sunday school, when I was a little kid in the Assembly of God church with the flannel graph, he was like a little boy on the altar. And it's like, okay, Abraham took his little son and put him on the altar.

If you look over at chapter 23, after the events of chapter 22, in verse 1 it says, And Sarah was 107 and 20 years old.

These were the years of the life of Sarah. So she dies. Isaac would be 37 years old at this time. Remember, he's 90. Sarah's 90 when she has him.

[2 : 21] So 37 years later, she dies. I don't think it's too hard of a stretch to think that the way the Scripture lays this out, this seems to come pretty quickly on the heels of the events of chapter 22.

Most people think Isaac's at least 25 years old. My guess is he's 30. Just because of the way God lays out patterns and the way he lays out types and typology, you know, this is a picture of Jesus when the Father offered him up.

And so either way, he's an older son. We're going to see in verse 5 of chapter 22 here, Abraham refers to him as a lad.

I and the lad will go yonder and worship. He says this to the young men. Abraham says this to the young men who are with him. These would be servants of his. These are not little boys that he's bringing. These are people he's brought to help him in this three-day journey.

Right? The word lad, translated in the English, and young men are the exact same word. Exact same word in the Hebrew that they're used for this. Again, in verse 12, we're going to see where it says, God's going to say, don't lay your hand upon the lad.

[3 : 36] Those are the same words. It can mean a small child, but it can also just mean a son, an offspring, or a young man. So that will all come into play because it makes a difference whether Isaac is 5 years old or 25 years old in this account.

And so it came to pass after these things. After what things? Well, Abraham's been sojourning now in the land of Beersheba, the land of the well of the oath. He's put down roots.

He's growing. Isaac is growing into a young man. He's having the time of his life. This is what he's always wanted. God has fulfilled his promise to him. And after these things, it says that God did tempt Abraham.

God is going to tempt him. Well, that should fire off some bells in our heads. There should be some scriptures that right away we come to mind. James 1.13 says, Let no man say when he's tempted, I'm tempted of God, for God cannot, thank you, Lord, be tempted with evil.

Neither tempts he any man. So God can't tempt us. It says that God won't tempt with evil. He can't. So any man, you can't say when you're tempted to sin, well, God's just, he's tempting me like he did Abraham.

[4 : 50] And we're told by Jesus to pray in Matthew 6.13. He said to pray and lead us not into temptation, but to deliver us from evil. So what is this word tempt here?

We know in Corinthians, Paul will say that there's no temptation temptation that has overtaken you, but such as is common to man, that God will, with that temptation, make a way of escape. Well, this word here, tempt, doesn't mean to tempt to sin.

It means to try to prove, and actually has the idea in it of trying by smell. I like that. It's kind of like, is it ripe? Does it smell ripe? You know, does it smell good?

I think of like, when someone's baking something, you know, in the kitchen, when my wife's baking, you smell throughout the house, like, it starts to permeate the house. It starts to like, starts to cook and starts, oh, wow, you know, is that ready yet?

And you're all drawn there. And so there's this idea of that God is, there's this aroma. And we know in the New Testament, Paul tells us that we are a sweet aroma unto the Lord, that we are pleasing to him.

[5 : 51] And so the Lord knows, oh, Abraham's ripe for this test. Abraham, I've been building your life, step by step, failure by failure, victory by victory.

You have seen that I have not failed you. Your faith hasn't failed, Abraham. And now you're ripe for this test. This was not a test to prove faith, but to reveal it.

This wasn't to prove, well, does Abraham have faith? God knew it. And this was to reveal it. Faith was the point of this test. You see, we were talking a little about this yesterday at the men's discipleship.

We want to see God do impossible things in our lives. I want to see God do impossible things in my life. But that means I have to be in an impossible situation, doesn't it? I was thinking of the scripture in Hebrews, Hebrews 11, verses 33 through 35.

Speaking of those who have walked by faith, it says that, who through faith subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness and obtained promises and stopped the mouths of lions and quenched the violence of fire.

[6 : 56] They escaped the edge of the sword. Out of weakness were made strong. Waxed valiant in fight. Turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead to life again. It's exciting.

Man, these people really got to experience God's power. But you know what that means? That means if they stopped the mouth of lions, that means the mouth of the lion was about to eat them. And they were in a place where the lion was about to eat them. If they escaped the edge of the sword, the sword was about to get them. They quenched the violence of fire, that means they were in danger of being burned.

If they turned to flight the army of the enemies, that means the enemy was at their door. And women received their dead to life. That means someone you love had to die so that God could raise them back to life.

So we want to see God do impossible things. But am I willing to let God place me in an impossible situation? And so God is tempting or trying is the better word, proving Abraham.

[7 : 53] Is he proving him to God? God, let me see what's going to happen. No way. He knew. But Abraham needed to know. Abraham needed to go through this to see what, like we were talking about, how big his God is.

Not how big Abraham was or how big his faith is. When you go through a trial and God delivers you, you don't go, man, I'm getting there. Before you know it, I'm going to be Apostle Paul 2.0. No, no, no.

You're like, thank you, Lord. I don't know how you got me through that. You're amazing. So God is never a means to an end. And his promise is not the end. We can lose sight of the God, of the promise, when we focus too much on the promise.

And we try and hold that too tightly here. And so God is trying Abraham by what? Well, what comes to him? And God said, it was the word. The word came to Abraham.

It wasn't some feeling. It wasn't just some idea. It wasn't like some random vision or dream or, you know, someone spoke a word over him. This was God's word spoken to Abraham.

[8 : 52] He knew it. He heard it. He could recognize it. And he believed it. And it said to him, Abraham. And Abraham says, behold, here I am.

Or literally, behold me. Behold me, God. Behold me. Three times Abraham's going to say this. He says this once to God here. He's going to say it to Isaac over in verse 7.

And then he says it again to the Lord when the Lord comes to him on Moriah in verse 11. Behold me. Here I am. Behold me. Abraham's probably excited.

God's speaking to him again. This is fantastic. God's come again to speak to me directly. He said, Abraham. And he said, behold me. Here I am, God. This idea of surrender. Whatever, Lord. I'm here.

And he said, take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell you of.

[9 : 55] And I think Abraham's heart just crashed, just sunk. The word love there means like desire or breathe. Like the very air I breathe. I have this great desire.

He said, I know he's the breath in your lungs, Abraham. I know how much you love Isaac. In the New Testament, Jesus will be sent by the Father to a hill, right?

To give himself as a sacrifice. We get the perspective of the Son, don't we? We see Jesus' heart as he prays in the garden. We see Jesus' heart for his disciples in the high priestly prayer in John 17.

We see him going up the hill. We see him as he cries out on the cross. That's the perspective of the Son. I think this chapter, I think it gives us the heart of the Father. I think this is God's heart when his Son is hanging on that cross and he's sending there.

I think Abraham is a picture of that. So there's Abraham's personal walk, which has a lot for us. And then there's this other picture of the heart that God had, the heart of the Father as he offers up the Son.

[11 : 01] So they go to Moriah. Moriah means chosen by Jehovah. And that's where the theme to our message comes in, not by choice. It's not my choice, but it's God's choice.

This was chosen by Jehovah. This is not the direction Abraham wanted to go or would have gone if he could have chosen for himself. Moriah, if you remember, Abraham's down there in Beersheba. Originally, he was in Hebron at the time when Sodom and Gomorrah were smoked by the Lord. And the Lord, he leaves from there to Gerar in an act of weakness. And then from there, he resorts to Beersheba, where he's been all these years.

And now God's telling him to go to Moriah. You can see that's going to take him right back up through Hebron into Moriah. And we're going to find out that's a three-day journey. And so the Lord tells him, go into the land of Moriah and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering.

Moriah, in 2 Chronicles 3, verse 1, it tells us this. It says, Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

[12 : 20] So if you remember, when David, in his act of weakness, counts all the people, has Joab count them, and then that was an act of defiance against the Lord. There's judgment brought on the people. A plague is upon them.

And then David looks out in a vision. He sees the angel of God standing on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. He goes and purchases that, offers a sacrifice there, and that then becomes the place where the temple's built.

This is on the Mount Moriah. Well, the temple is in what? Jerusalem. Where was Jesus crucified? Just outside the gate.

Just outside Jerusalem, which is still on Mount Moriah. And this is where Abraham is going. And so God had handpicked Abraham's trial, handpicked the way in which he would prove him.

So we have the assurance ourselves that whatever situation we go into, God's handpicked that. We don't. Abraham didn't get up and go, you know what? I just want to see what God's going to do if I, like, offered up my son as a sacrifice.

[13:18] Let's go and do that. This was the word of God speaking to him. We have the assurance to know that the circumstances and trials in our life, they're picked by God.

Is God testing Abraham in such a way that Abraham's going to have a loss from this? Right now it looks like it, doesn't it? Abraham's heart is breaking because he's got to go and offer up his son. But this is not for Abraham's loss, but ultimately for his gain. In this moment, Abraham may not have understood the why of God's word. Why did God's word come to me in this way?

Why did he have it speak to me in this way? But he fully understood the who. He knew his God at this point, and God had brought him to this point. And he had a choice to make. God was not going to force him.

He said, Abraham, take now and go. Abraham could have said, no, I'm not going to do that. Mm-mm, forget it. But Abraham, by his response to God in verse one, that was a response of surrender.

[14:16] Here, behold me, God. What would you have me to do? Here I am. But he says something interesting, doesn't he? And if you remember, as we've been going through this account, well, what kind of stands out here is like, um, wait a minute.

Take now your son, your only son? Your only son? Well, who's his other son? Ishmael? Well, uh, this can't be the Lord then because this must be incorrect. I have another son.

Phew, I don't have to do this. I can explain this away. His only son. Well, from God's standpoint, Abraham did only have one son because only one son came by promise. Right?

Faith takes no account of the flesh. And from the Lord's perspective, he's like, Abraham, you have one son because you have one son that falls under the promise that I've given you, that falls under the promise of the blessing I gave you back in chapter 12.

And faith doesn't take account of the flesh. Yes, Abraham's going to have many other children.

We're going to find out after Sarah dies, he marries Ketira and has other children. But they are not the son that God has promised to him.

[15:23] Colossians chapter 3, it tells us, for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ and God. That's a fact. You are dead and your life, dead in what way? We've died to our sins. That with Christ, as we, representation of baptism, buried with him in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life.

Baptism doesn't save us, but it's identifying with the fact that, yes, Jesus has died for me so that my sin and my self-nature, it's dead with him on the cross. But then Paul says, mortify or make dead, reckon dead, therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, and ordinate affection, evil concupiscences, that's just like having to do with corrupt finances, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

So we're dead, that's the act, that's the fact. But then we're demortified, that's the act. And so we have this strange conundrum, right? Romans tells us, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And what is sin?

Well, sin is that which is not of God. Sin is anything outside of God. Sin is what separates me from God. All that is in God is of God. What's in God? His promise, His word.

Isaac is by promise, that's of God, it's in God. Anything outside of God is not of God, it's sin. You see, there's no sin in heaven, and there's no faith in hell.

[16:40] This life is the only place sin and faith exist together. And they do so in our hearts. This is the only place where sin and faith exist together.

The cross was the moment where sin and faith met for their final confrontation, didn't they? And faith won. The trust in God, Jesus' trust in God, won and overcame sin.

We're told in 1 John 5, whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. And so just like us, well, we're living in a world where sin is defeated, where God says, you're dead to sin.

Reckon it so. Live it out in such a way according to that truth. But it's still present, isn't it? Well, it's the same with Isaac and Ishmael. God looks down and says, you only have one son. Ishmael may be present, but this is your son.

This is the only one that I acknowledge and recognize. And so Abraham, he responds to this. He hears God's voice, he knows God's voice, and he obeys God's voice.

[17 : 51] Abraham lived not by the word of God only, but by the God of the word. He didn't just, well, you know, whatever God's word says, I got to find it out.

I'm just going to scour it. He recognized that God's word was being spoken to him directly. It wasn't just some random scripture that he just took and was like, okay, yeah, I'll go do that. You know, he didn't play Bible roulette, where he just kind of go.

And the Lord said, go and kill all the host. All right, you know, that must be the Lord. No, he knew God's voice because he knew God. And so Abraham, in verse three, it says he rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey.

This was probably the longest night of his life. A very long night. Jesus had one of those long nights, didn't he? When he went to Gethsemane, and he went and he prayed and he took Peter and James and John.

He says in verse 38 of Matthew 26, he said unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Tarry you here and watch with me. And he went a little further and fell on his face and prayed saying, oh, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

[19 : 01] Nevertheless, not my will, but as thou wilt. And he came unto his disciples and he found them asleep and said unto Peter, well, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Two things there. We see Jesus agonizing in the garden. He gets to the end of that and he's going to go back and pray and then he says again, not my will, but as thou wilt.

Right? The battle for the cross was won in the garden. It was over. It was then just for Jesus to play out the rest of it, to walk out the remaining act.

The battle was won in the garden. He had surrendered there. And then he says to Peter, hey, Peter, watch and pray so that you too can overcome your trial that's to come.

Peter thought, I'll deal with it when I get there. I'll never deny you, Lord. And that moment, and the Lord's like, no, you need to be prepared before that moment comes. And here I think Abraham, by the time he got up in verse 3, where it says he rose up early, and we know from looking at his life, this is a pattern for him, rising up early, rising up early, prioritizing God's will in his life.

[20 : 16] I think by the time he rose up, he was surrendered. That was a long night. It's interesting too, he never tells Sarah as far as we know in this. This is between the Father and the Son only.

This is not for Sarah right now. And he rose up and he got everything together. It says that he got the young men, he got the donkey, he cut the wood himself, and he rose up and went to the place of which God had told him.

He didn't put this responsibility on anyone else. And then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Psalm 121 says, I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence comes my help.

My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. And as Abraham lifts up his eyes to this place afar off. God is continuing to speak to Abraham. How do we know that?

Well, at the end of verse 2, he says, of the mountains of which I will tell you. And then in verse 3, at the end, it says, and he rose unto the place of which God told him.

[21 : 21] But yet, God has yet to specifically point out the mountain until he lifts up his eyes and sees. And so God's continuing to speak to him. Abraham's ears are continually opened to the Lord. This wasn't one of those things where he just said, okay, God told me to do this.

I'm going to buckle down and I'm going to go do it and just get this deed done. Now his heart is open still to the Lord. For three days now, Isaac has laid dead in the heart of Abraham.

For three days, it's been quiet. There's been unknown. There's been this waiting. for three days as he's journeyed with Isaac. In the heart of Abraham, he was already dead.

Every time Isaac spoke to him, every conversation they had was probably just like another stab to the heart of Abraham. How many times as they were walking, was Abraham tears streaming down his face?

You know, looking away from Isaac so he wouldn't see him. A long three days. Abraham was obedient, but it wasn't easy. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide here with the donkey and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again.

[22 : 34] This task, the task ahead was for the father and son only. This was for nobody else. Nobody else was there. It was between the father and son. What does he say, him and the lad or the young man, him and Isaac, what are they going to go do?

They're going to worship. This is the first use of the word worship in scripture. The first time we see that. It means to bow down. It doesn't mean to praise. It doesn't mean to sing. It means to bow down.

So, whether our weekly worship leader is here or not, we still can bow down before God in his presence. You know, as Derek was singing, to him in his mind, he might have thought, well, this is not going how I want it to.

But in my mind, my heart was just connecting with the Lord. You hear those words, your voice is lifted up and it's just like, the Lord is so good as we bow down and worship him.

This is the picture of worship. What is it? It's sacrifice. It's relinquishing to the Lord something he's asking of you that's of great value. That is worshiping the Lord. You see, we think of surrender as giving up.

[23 : 42] All right, fine, take it. Okay, what I can give to the Lord, what I can give to the Lord, right? But it's not. We're going to find out that true surrender is not withholding from God what he asks of us. It's not initiated by us.

It's initiated here by the Lord. And then, what else does he say? And I love this part. And they went, I'm sorry, I and the lad will go yonder. We will worship and we, we will come again.

To you. Abraham had surrendered Isaac long before they reached the mountain. And in his mind, he was already dead and resurrected. In his mind, he was already dead and resurrected.

And we know that from Hebrews. Hebrews 11, and speaking of Abraham's faith, it says, by faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, he finally got him, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called, accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.

From whence also he received him in a figure. So we're not going to get to that part, but next week, we're going to see that Abraham, in his mind, had received his son twice now.

[24 : 56] Once in birth and once in resurrection. And so Abraham and Isaac now, they go on together in this little journey here. And Abraham then takes the wood of the burnt offering, which probably was on the donkey, takes it off and he lays it on Isaac.

And he puts it upon Isaac, his son. He took the fire in his hand and the knife and they went both of them on together. You see, the father had to decide if he would offer up the son.

He had to choose that. But the son also had to go willingly, didn't he? The son had to surrender to the work of the father. He had to surrender to his will for any of this to work. At any point, Isaac could have been like, no, dad.

You know, I know God rejuvenated you and that whole thing, you and mom, you know, when you were like 100 and now you're like, you know, some 40-year-old man or whatever, but like, I'm no spring chicken. I mean, I'm no, whatever it is.

I am a spring chicken. Yeah. I'm no has-been here. I can take you, you know. So, no, you're not doing this. But there's a willingness there. Why?

[26 : 04] Because the son knew the heart of the father, didn't he? He's walked with him now. Jesus tells us in John chapter 10, no man takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it in.

This commandment have I received of my father. Jesus is saying, you can't take my life from me, but I'm going to yield to my father because I know my father's heart.

In John 19, when they were leading Jesus to Golgotha, then Pilate delivered him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. They took Jesus and they led him away. And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him.

They laid the wood upon Jesus, just as they did here upon Isaac. But it was more than that, wasn't it? Isaiah 53, 6 tells us what was really laid on him. Because all we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

So the Father is laying this upon the Son, and his heart is breaking. You know, I think Abraham is just weeping. Isaac has got to know what's coming, because he's going to say here now, in verse 7, And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father.

[27 : 27] And this is the only time the Son speaks. And what does he ask about? He said unto Abraham his father, and Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father and said, My father.

He said, Here I am, my son, or behold me. I'm here for you, son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where's the lamb for a burnt offering?

The only time the Son speaks is not about himself. Dad, what are you going to do to me? Hey, maybe we should have told Mom about this, you know?

Bet she's not going to like this. The only time he speaks is to ask about the lamb. The Son speaks to inquire about the lamb. If you remember, again, in Matthew we just read where Jesus, when he speaks, he says, My Father, if it's possible, take this cup from me, but not my will.

Yours be done. I surrender to you. And Abraham's reply now, and he said, behold, oh, I'm sorry, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?

[28 : 35] And Abraham said, My son, and I'm sure he said this with a broken heart, my God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them on together.

We know from the New Testament, Jesus tells us that Abraham saw my day and was glad. Did Abraham see 700 plus years into the future at this moment? Did he look forward and go, Isaac, I don't know.

I don't know what's going to happen here. I know what God's promised and his word is held fast through everything in my life and I know he's promised that through you the seed will come.

So whatever happens on that mountain, I know we're coming down together. But looking beyond that, Isaac, I know that God will provide himself a lamb. John 1 29, John the Baptist and seeing Jesus coming unto him said, Behold the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

And where Isaac said, Where's the lamb? Well, 700 plus years later, John the Baptist says, Behold, it's the lamb.

[29 : 37] There he is. Hebrews 10, verses 5 through 7, speaking of Jesus, he said, Wherefore, when he comes into the world, he said, Sacrifice and offering you would not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, that was no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, and the volume of the book is written of me to do thy will, O God. The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart.

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. It wasn't the sacrifice. The fact that Jesus died on the cross wasn't what saved us. It wasn't the payment.

It was like, well, he's dead. Okay, somebody died. That wasn't it. It was the willingness. He surrendered to his father in obedience. Philippians tells us, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

What's the emphasis there? That he became obedient. He surrendered and became obedient. And then God could work through that surrendered life our redemption. So here the son surrendering to the father and to his voice as Abraham says, God will provide himself a lamb.

[30 : 48] Son, you don't worry about that. You trust me. We're going to keep going. And they came to the place which God had told him of. Well, when did he tell him of that? Somewhere within these three days, God said, that's the mountain, Abraham.

Go to the land of Moriah and I'll show you there what you need to know and where you need to be. So they came to the place that God had told him of and Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order.

So they're building this altar. Father and son building the altar. You know, Isaac's helping him stone after stone, rolling it and building it, laying the wood, ordering the wood there. And then what does he do?

He turns to the son and he begins to bind him. He begins to lay him on this altar. He's bound in such a way that he's not getting off. Just as Jesus was bound to his altar that he could not get off once he was placed there.

And Abraham has this moment where he's got to decide, do I take up that knife? Do I go through with this? This is crazy. I thought God would have stopped me by now. God, I've gone so far. I mean, I know it says in the New Testament, you know, Jesus said, you know, he's not willing to give up everything and follow me, you know, but did he really want me to give up everything?

[31 : 58] I've gotten pretty close to giving up everything. You really want me to do the final act of this? Don't cling so tightly to the promise that you lose your grip on the God who gave the promise,

right?

God knew the danger Abraham faced and clinging too tightly to Isaac. Love unrestrained sends more souls to hell than almost anything. What does that mean?

Love unrestrained. The love that's not restrained by agape love. The love of a man for a woman.

The love of a mother for a child. No, I know what's best. I'm not going to surrender this.

I can't give this to God. No, I know what's best. I have to have this. I will not let it go. God knew the danger that if Abraham said no and turned away and took Isaac and went back down that mountain. You know what happens then when God's love is removed from an unrestrained love? It turns bitter. It turns hard. It turns dangerous. It turns sour. It becomes self-seeking.

[32 : 59] It just becomes this empty, dark vortex that just wants to suck in because it can't be filled anymore. And I want to use other people to try and satisfy this love that only God can.

John 15, Jesus said, this is my commandment that you love one another as I've loved you. Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend.

I like the phrase there. Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down. Lay down what?

What's God asking you to lay down in worship to him? And so Abraham says here, he stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

That word stretch literally means to send, to send forth. Abraham's hands were sent to do the will of God. It's like, all right, this is hard and I don't understand it. No matter how difficult that work might be, I'm going to go through with this.

You know, in the New Testament, it says, when Jesus won the cross, the statements he made on the cross, he yells out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And you think of that song or that hymn where it says the Father turned his face away.

[34 : 17] That's the idea that God is forsaken to be left alone, to turn away. But reading this, I was thinking how, I've always heard it taught, like, well, it's because Jesus was sin, God couldn't look on sin, you know.

But I wonder if it was because the Father's heart was breaking and he was weeping and he just, he didn't want the son to see. He just couldn't look upon him anymore.

He couldn't believe what had to be done as he turns away. And I picture Abraham reaching for that knife, just weeping and turned away from his son and he's going to do the deed, you know.

It's not because he despises his son, it's because he loves him and his heart is breaking. And every time that one of those nails was driven into Jesus, his hands and feet, every hit of that hammer, it went into his nails, I mean, into his hands and his feet, right?

But I think for the Father, it was like in his heart, every hit was like driven deeper and deeper and deeper into his heart. As Abraham prepares here to do the unimaginable, and the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham, two times now he says his name.

[35 : 31] There's such love here. There's such, it just seems like joy. I just get this picture of this name from him. Abraham, Abraham! Yes, Abraham! And Abraham says, here I am.

You know his ears were straining for that, that he was hoping for that. His heart was like aching for that voice. There's the song and the line in it, I can't remember the name of the song, but it's the one I come to the garden alone.

It says, in the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses or makes known. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other have ever known.

No greater joy than the voice of God has Abraham ever known. And in this moment, he says, Abraham, he says, here I am. Lay not, send not your hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.

For now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not only withheld your son, I'm sorry, seeing thou is not withheld thy son, thine only son. Never get so caught up in God's work that you can't hear God's voice.

[36 : 51] It's a danger. This is what God has told me to do and nothing is going to stop me from it. What if God wants to stop you from it? Well, no, this is producing fruit. No, this is what I want to do with my life.

No, this is what I want to do with my life. He's finally given me a family. He's finally given me this career. He's finally given me a relationship. This is what God wants and nothing is going to take it from me.

In John chapter 3, verse 8, it says, the wind blows where it will and you can hear the sound thereof, but you can't tell where it comes, where it's coming from or where it goes.

So it's everyone that's born the Spirit. So if you have a windy day and you take a leaf and you throw it out there, I mean, there's no rhyme or reason. You can't see what's moving them. They go this way, then they go that way, and then they go this way.

It seems like they just change direction for no reason. And we're told, Jesus tells us, it's the same way. If you're led by the Spirit, man, from the outside, I might look at your life and go, whoa. They were so set on that and all of a sudden they just went a different direction.

[37 : 50] What's that about? What in the world? It's because they're led by the Spirit. Their heart is attuned and open to the voice of the Lord. They're following God. They're following a person, not a principle.

And so what changed Abraham's mind? Was it like he had a feeling, a sense? It was God's Word, wasn't it? He heard the voice. He heard God's Word. It's the same with us. As we are led by God, don't let anything else change.

Change your direction but His Word. What does that mean? We have to be in His Word. You have to know His Word. You have to know God, know His voice, to hear His voice, to recognize it, to then obey Him.

This is not the work of a moment. Abraham has been walking with the Lord many years now. He has put time into his relationship with his God and he's reaping now the amazing fruits of that in his life of faith.

So God already knew what Abraham had yet to prove to himself. He says, for now I know. Well, God didn't know. Of course He did. The word there, know, is like by experience, to have experienced this.

[38 : 53] He knew. He just needed Abraham to walk this out, this experience. That you fear God. So, it's the first time this phrase is together. Fear God. This is the first time it's put together.

You know, Proverbs tells us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It tells us the fear of God brings confidence. It's our strength. This is the first time these two words are put together. It's not the first time fear is used in Scripture, but the way fear is used here.

This word actually means not like terror or trepidation or apprehension. It means like to reverence. It's the first use of the word fear for reverence.

He says, for now I know that you reverence me. And so how do we do that? How do we show that to God? Well, the example we've been given here is in worship as we bow down, as we surrender to God. What then, how does that work out in our life?

It's the experience then of walking through, responding to God and his word and surrender. God said, that shows me that you reverence me.

[39 : 53] Our love for God is best displayed not in what we give up for him, but in what we do not withhold from him. So God says to Abraham, I know you reverence me because you've not withheld what I've asked of you.

I can hide a lot of what I don't want to do for the, give up for the Lord or do for the Lord behind all kinds of seemingly spiritual-ish things that I can give to him.

But that's not what he's looking for. He wants us to respond like Abraham did. Behold me, here I am. What else do we see? We see that God's promises are meant to be given back to him.

They're not meant to be harbored and hoarded. They're meant to be given back to God. When God gives us something, it's to surrender it back to him because only after it's given back to God can we fully realize and appropriate it.

And that's the principle we'll see all through Scripture. Life only comes after surrender, death, and resurrection. Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone.

[40 : 54] But if it die, it brings forth much fruit. You have to allow that process to take place. God's promises are not meant to be kept apart from being surrendered to him.

So Abraham, the heart of the father in this, the joy at this moment where his son who had been dead is now alive, his son who in his mind and heart was just sacrificed, the tears of joy as he cuts those ropes and lifts his son up off the altar, receives him back in a type of resurrection.

I don't think the relationship would ever be the same after this. I don't think Abraham would ever look at his son the same because now he knew, he knew that not even death itself could separate him from his son.

The end of Romans 8, it says, for I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us, literally to divorce, separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You and I, we can read that. We can know that as a fact. But there's going to come a point in our life where God's going to want to turn that into an act that I can know just like Paul said, I am persuaded.

[42 : 15] Well, Paul's been persuaded because of the life he lived. He walked through every experience where he could say death didn't separate me from him. Demons didn't separate me from him. No power did. The things to come didn't, nothing did.

I can emphatically tell you based on the authority of the word of God that nothing can separate you from the love of God. And then I can also emphatically tell you that as you walk with the Lord he's going to want you to experience that throughout your life.

That's going to mean trusting him to lead you into impossible situations. It's going to mean letting Jehovah choose for you what you'd never choose for yourself. And it's going to mean trusting him that there's always resurrection on the other side of that trial.

So as we close we have a few examples I think we can see from Abraham. We can see him as a type of the life of faith. That's what he's presented to us in our walk.

And then we can also see him as a type of the father. But as a type and example of the life of faith he's not the initiator. We've got to be okay with that. He's not the initiator. I don't get to choose for me the trials that are coming the testing the proving I don't get to decide when I'm ripe.

[43 : 22] I'm like yeah Lord I'm ready he's like no that's not a good smell. You're not ready. That's not the right smell. Not for that. I don't get to choose that. He does. He initiates. But it's my place simply to respond in faith and obedience to the word just like Abraham did.

It was God's word. God's word directed him through this very hard trial step by step. He surrendered he obeyed and he believed God. And then as a type of the father like we said in John we get this type we see the son and his heart on the cross and now we see I think the heart of the father here as he offers up his son.

The father initiates everything in the life of the son. It is the father's direction it's the father who leads him to this place of sacrifice. The son surrenders to his father's will and obedience and we looked at some scripture where Jesus did that.

And it gives us a picture of the father's heart during the sacrifice of the son of what it must have cost the Lord our father God the father as his son was led to the cross.

You know Abraham walked with Isaac through this whole process as Jesus was having the scourge upon his back the father was there. As Jesus was led up the hill to Golgotha and he collapses and they have to bring Simon the guy from the crowd to help him with the cross.

[44 : 48] The father was there with him his heart breaking weeping as he was at the cross they were nailing those nails into his hands on his feet the father was right there his heart breaking and it wasn't until Jesus cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me because the father had to turn his head away because this was his son who he loved his only begotten son and his heart was breaking over this.

It wasn't because I had sin I can't look upon that it was because look what's happened to my son look at this but he knew what was on the other side and so as we end I guess the question is what about you and me?

As we end the Lord would put before us that same question and he put before Abraham he said Abraham I have a place chosen for you you would never have chosen for yourself but what are you going to do?

Does it seem evil unto you? Joshua says to Israel as he's heading off the scene preparing to transfer authority to the next man as he's about to die he says it's over for me guys I have done my part but what about you?

Does it seem evil to serve the Lord? Does it seem like God's evil when he says to you take your son your only son whom you love take the desire of your eyes take the love of your life and give it to me?

[46 : 11] Does that seem evil to you? Well then choose this day who you will serve whether the gods which your father served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites in whose lands you dwell are you going to serve these other guys?

How did that turn out? Go serve the gods of this world you'll get fame you'll get fortune you'll get pleasure you will and you'll get an easy life of comfort but you'll also get depression you'll also get discouragement and heartache you'll also get broken relationships you'll also get paranoia and in the end you'll get separation from God and hell who are you going to serve?

Choose you this day who you will serve so I think there's three questions we can ask ourselves as we close what is Jehovah chosen for me for you that I would have never chosen for myself?

What's he put in front of us that we would have never chosen for ourselves? what unexpected thing has God asked of us? What unexpected thing has God asked of you?

You never would have expected you never would have expected that Jesus would come into your life and say believe in me and you shall have everlasting life but that's crazy sometimes I think about things I believe and I think Lord it's crazy to the natural mind it's crazy to this world I never would have expected that I could have a soul saved sanctified and set apart for heaven by believing in Jesus that Jesus is real and he gave his life for me on the cross what Isaac what promise is God wanting you to lay aside and surrender to him not for your loss but for your gain the thing that you desire so greatly you finally have and God says give it to me it's not for your loss our temptation is to think in our own flesh God's taking this from me I can't believe it why would he do that it's for our gain and that can be hard there are people who've lost loved ones there's people who've had disastrous situations in their life there's people with health problems and they think why

[48 : 17] God I have such a loss it's because they're not willing to lay it on the altar so that God can raise it back up in resurrection and they can be like wow there's nothing but gain here this is all gain God's blessing on Abraham his further blessing doesn't come until after their son has been offered up doesn't come until after resurrection the ram that's going to be in the thicket the substitute is not until after surrender until what's surrendered is laid on the altar so as God asks us to lay upon the altar whatever it is don't expect to see God's provision before that happens right I can wait years and I think I have foolishly waited to see God move and provide when he'd already asked me what I needed to surrender what I was withholding from him to withhold something kind of implies it's already his doesn't it kind of implies it's already the Lord's he's like you're kind of just holding back what should be mine

Abraham don't withhold Isaac let's pray father that was a tougher section of scripture than I thought to get through Lord just seeing your heart Lord the love you had for your son as you laid him on the altar Lord with you before the foundation of the world before creation began eternity past the father and son delighting in one another's presence and in fellowship and then Lord because of this horrible situation where sin and faith collide in my heart you you laid the son on the altar you took him to the cross and as the nails are driven into his hands and feet Lord you took that nail into your heart because sin needed to be defeated so that resurrection and new life could be given to us and Lord this morning it is hard

Lord it is not easy at times Lord to walk into the things you place in front of us because I don't see the other side but Lord I want to be like Abraham who through this whole thing as Hebrews tells us he knew who his God was and he knew you would fulfill your word Lord we know you your character your nature we know who you are and we have your word Lord let us see everything we do in light of that instead of choosing what's comfortable or easy or doesn't bring pain or let us choose instead like Abraham just to open our hearts and just say behold me God Lord search me and try me you know my heart God search me and try me and see if there be any wicked way in me Lord you know the depths of that heart Lord we love you so much thank you father for the love you have for the son amazingly then Jesus tells us the love wherewith you have loved him so you love us we want to say we love you and in

Jesus name amen