

# (Genesis) - Part 19

by Zac Poonen

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*God's timing is perfect, and faith and patience are necessary to inherit the promises of God.*

**Duration:** 58:25

**Scripture:** Genesis 20:17, Genesis 21:1, Genesis 21:15-17, Galatians 4:21-31, Hebrews 6:12

**Topics:** "Genesis"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being free from attachment to worldly things. He uses the example of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son Isaac to illustrate this point. The preacher highlights how Abraham immediately obeyed God's command, showing his unwavering faith. The sermon also references Galatians chapter 4, where the apostle Paul contrasts the Old Testament with the New Testament and encourages believers to live under the freedom of the new covenant.

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## Transcript

Let's turn now to Genesis, in Chapter 21. Genesis, Chapter 21. In our last study, we considered how this heathen king Abimelech rebuked Abraham for telling him a lie, and then we read that Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maid, Chapter 20, Verse 17, so that they bore children.

For the Lord had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Then, we need to take notice of this word, then, whenever it occurs in scripture. When we read then, that means it was a particular time.

And it says here, then, Chapter 21, Verse 1, the Lord took note of Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised for 25 years. Abraham had held on to that promise, and now it is fulfilled. But it says then, and we can ask when.

And the answer is, when Abraham prayed for other barren women, his own barren wife conceived. Then, the Lord answered prayer. It is when we are concerned about the needs of others, even when a similar need is in our own home, and God sees an unselfish concern for the needs of others, then the Lord meets our needs.

We see that in Job 42, Verse 10 also, that the Lord turned the captivity of Job when, when he prayed for his friends. There is a principle here in scripture. Then, the Lord took note of Sarah when Abraham had

just prayed that other barren women would have children.

And that's perhaps the reason why many people do not receive God's best, because they are so preoccupied with their own needs. You see the same principle in what Jesus said in Matthew 6, Verse 33, that if you seek God's kingdom first, instead of being anxious about your own needs, you'll find that your own needs get met automatically. That is a principle in the kingdom of God, which is foolishness to the natural man.

Because the natural man says, you've got to take care of your own needs if you want them to be met. God says, no. God says, you take care of my kingdom, and I'll take care of your needs.

And this is the mark of faith. To live by faith is to say, Lord, I shall not worry about my needs. I shall only be taken up with the affairs of your kingdom, and my needs will just get met automatically.

Whereas, the man of unbelief doesn't say that. He says, I have to take care of myself. And that is how most Christians live, even most believers.

And that is why you find some believers, even after so many years, spiritually, they are still immature. And there we learn a lesson from Abraham's life. And we read in Verse 2, So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

There is an appointed time for the fulfillment of God's will. In doing the will of God, there are two things we need to know. One is, what is God's will? And second, when does He want to do it, or when does He want us to do it? It's as important to know the time as it is to know what God's will is.

For example, when people speak God's will in marriage, the person is important, and the time is important. Or, concerning any other event, if we can believe that there is an appointed time for what God has promised. And then we read here, At the appointed time of which God has spoken to him.

And that appointed time was twenty-five years after God first told him that in his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. In Hebrews Chapter 6, we are told in a commentary on this event, Hebrews 6, Verse 12, it says, Don't be lazy or sluggish. And what is the mark of spiritual laziness? Laziness in the kingdom of God is not the same as laziness in the world.

A lot of people who are very active in distributing tracts and visiting houses, they may think they are not lazy, but in God's eyes they may still be lazy, because spiritual laziness is marked by unbelief and impatience. And it says here, Don't be lazy, but imitators of those who through faith and patience. This is the mark of a person who is freed from laziness.

He's got faith and patience. In the New Testament, faith and patience are the opposite of laziness. Not just a lot of hard work.

Because it says here, Don't be lazy, but have faith and patience. In the world they say, Don't be lazy, but hard-working. In the New Testament it says, Don't be lazy, but have faith and patience to inherit the promises.

Don't be sluggish. And then it quotes Abraham, when God made the promise to Abraham. It says in verse fifteen, Thus having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

And we know that that patient waiting was for twenty-five years. And that word of God says that Abraham patiently waited. We don't read that in the Old Testament, but we know from this verse that in all those years he patiently waited.

He didn't keep pestering God. He patiently waited. And he received the promise.

And it says, There is an example for us to follow, that when you have laid hold of God for something and you don't get the answer tomorrow, there's no need to get discouraged. We're told to remember Abraham. When many people seek for victory over sin, they give up because they didn't get it within one week.

Or they ask for something else. They say prayer doesn't work because they expect everything within two days or three days or maximum a week or a month. Abraham waited for twenty-five years.

And it says here, If you are not willing to wait to receive what God has promised, you are spiritually sluggish or lazy. Spiritually lazy to lay hold of God and wait until He grants the promise to you. And so there is a fixed and appointed time for everything that God has promised for His people.

I believe there are many people who began to seek for the baptism in the Holy Spirit and who stopped out for a while because they didn't receive it. Spiritually lazy, sluggish. No, there must be faith and patience to lay hold of the promises.

At the appointed time when God has spoken, He fulfilled that promise. And God has a fixed time for everything. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac, specified that Sarah bore to him because in Hebrews 11, verse 11, we read about Sarah's faith.

Hebrews 11, verse 11, By faith even Sarah herself received ability or power to conceive, supernatural ability to have a child even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Now, this is the faith for God changing a physical function inside the body. Medical people would have written off Sarah and said, No hope.

Please discharge her. This is a condition that cannot be cured. Her condition was, she wanted to have a child and the doctor said, Please discharge her.

Hopeless case. Cannot, impossible. And then she had faith.

And it says, God, in the margin it says, she received power for the laying down of seed in her body. That means she received a supernatural power by faith to change a physical function within the body, which all the doctors said is impossible. That was because it was God's will.

And she had faith for that. And we know that her faith was not all that perfect that she never doubted. In fact, at one stage, she even laughed and wondered whether it would happen.

We needn't be discouraged if we have a few ups and downs like that, provided we lay hold of God. We can also receive power from God in situations where we may, where others may think it's impossible. So when we think of the faith of Sarah and we read in the Old Testament, we know it was not such a perfect thing.

It was coupled with some unbelief. But still she laid hold of God according to her understanding. And so there is an example for us.

It was not only Abraham's faith. It was Sarah's faith too. The New Testament tells us that.

And that's the wonderful thing, that both Abraham and Sarah had faith despite their ups and downs. They laid hold of God, and therefore at the appointed time, God could give them what He had promised. An example for husbands and wives today, to trust God together, to lay hold of what He had promised for them.

Then, verse 4, notice again, then, the word then. Abraham circumcised his son when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. He doesn't forget that.

He doesn't get so excited over the birth of Isaac, get so excited over something that he'd waited for twenty-five years and he finally got that he forgets to obey God. No. He's excited and thankful that God has done something for him.

But he's also very exact to know that his son must be circumcised. He didn't forget that. He didn't wake up on the ninth day and say, oh, I forgot.

I should have done something yesterday. See, I've come to see something about our memory. We tend to remember those things which we value very much.

And we tend to forget those things on which we don't place much value. It's not really a problem with our memory. It's a problem with the fact that we don't place value on certain things.

For example, a man may give a promise to someone. But he may not take this matter of giving promises seriously. And therefore, he may completely forget about it.

It's not his memory. There's a far more serious problem in his life that he doesn't take the giving of a promise seriously. That's it.

He may blame his memory. Abraham could have blamed his memory. He says, I'm a hundred years old.

I forgot that the eighth day I should have circumcised him. It's the ninth or tenth day today. No.

He remembered because that revealed to us that he had a certain attitude towards obedience where he knew this is very important. If God said the eighth day, I can't do it on the ninth. I can't wake up on the tenth day.

I have to do it on the eighth day. In other words, it was in his mind. In all the excitement of the childbearing, he says, the eighth day, I've got to watch for that.

There was an attitude towards God's commandments which we see there in Abraham's life, which is an example for us to follow in all things, to take God's word very exactly. And many people say they have a poor memory. I believe their memory can improve tremendously if they only take certain things seriously in life.

For example, if the governor of Karnataka or the chief minister were to say to any of us, I want to meet you on the, say, the thirteenth of this month, I don't think any of us will forget it. That's almost impossible. Because that is a very important thing for us, the thirteenth.

I'll be looking forward to the thirteenth. But when it is some other thing which I don't think is so important, I can forget it. And I believe that's a test of whether we can say we value one another as brothers and sisters.

But in these matters we know whether we value one another or not. If I value a brother and I have said something, I would certainly try my best to do what I have said or to tell him that I am not able to do it. So I don't want anybody to get into condemnation on this, but it's a good idea to check up whether the problem is really with our memory or whether that we take so many things in life so lightly, like the promises we give or the commandments of God.

Abraham, on the eighth day, he circumcised exactly as God had commanded him. And that circumcision was the cutting off of the flesh. I believe it was also a testimony in that sense that Abraham did not belong to this world because at that time circumcision was a covenant, sign of a covenant, which was later on given to Israel, that you are my people and not the people of the world, like all the others in the world.

All the other people in the world were not circumcised, but you are, because you are a special people for me. And that was the meaning. And that is what we read in Hebrews 11 of the way Abraham lived during his earthly life.

And that really came home to my heart when I read it in Hebrews 11 and verse 13, speaking about Abraham and Sarah, which says, All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, that they belonged to God, that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. So those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own, and that was not Canaan. Indeed, if they had been seeking, thinking of that country from which they came out, that is, Ur of the Chaldees, they would have had opportunity to return.

If Abraham sat there and began to think of his relatives and think of all the other comforts he had given up in Ur of the Chaldees, now he had to live in a tent. In Ur of the Chaldees he did not live in a tent, he lived in a mud building. Or a solid, permanent building.

But he didn't think of all those comforts. If he had, he would have had opportunity to return, it says. Speaking about Abraham.

That if there was some time in his life Abraham had the attitude that Lot's wife had, he could have packed up his bags and gone back. But he didn't do that. But as it is, they desire a better country, and essentially a heavenly one.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God. That is why he called himself the God of Abraham, because Abraham sought for a country that was above. And that's why he called himself the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

And he has prepared a city for them, and that teaches us how God calls himself by any believer's name. When he sees that a certain believer really does not have his interests on anything on this earth, but is really seeking treasure in heaven, God is not ashamed to be called the God of that believer. And circumcision was, in one sense, testimony to that fact, that they were an exclusive people, separate from the rest of the world.

Genesis 21.5, Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God has made laughter for me, everyone who hears will laugh with me. And she said, who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children, yet have born him a son in his old age? And the child grew, and was weaned.

And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And that must have been a few years. And then we read that Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, which is Ishmael, whom she had born to Abraham, mocking, laughing at Isaac.

Maybe, you know, Isaac may have been just a small boy, and Ishmael was at least thirteen, fourteen years older than Isaac. Amazing that a boy of eighteen or nineteen should be teasing his five-year-old younger brother. And yet that's what he was doing.

He should have been ashamed of himself, that he's so old and he's teasing this little five-year-old boy. And there is a picture of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Ishmael mocks Isaac.

That which is born according to the flesh mocks that which is born according to the spirit. And that which is born according to the flesh is a young, strong, hefty, nineteen-year-old man. And that which is born according to the spirit, according to the eyes of the world, is a weak, helpless thing.

And yet God is with that little boy, and not with this mighty, hefty young man. The conflict between the flesh and the spirit. And therefore she said to Abraham, Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this woman, of this maid, shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.

See, there was no conflict until Isaac was born. And that is a picture of the fact that there is no conflict in our life till we are born again. It's only after we are born again and something of God comes into us that this conflict begins between the flesh and the spirit.

It is also a picture of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Ishmael is a picture of the Old Covenant, which came first, but which is abolished, cast out, as Ishmael was cast out. And Isaac is a picture of the New Covenant, which is born not by the strength of man, but by faith in the supernatural working of God.

And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son. But God said to Abraham, Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid. Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her.

For through Isaac your descendants will be named, and of the son of a maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant. So Abraham rose early in the morning. Notice the immediacy of Abraham's obedience, the immediate obedience that there was in Abraham's life.

God spoke to him at night, and he got up in the morning and he obeyed. That seems to be a characteristic of Abraham's life. We said before how when God speaks something, if a person has to think about it for a week before he obeys, usually it never goes well with such a believer.

You find that all through his life that believer will be like that. He'll take one week or one year to obey God. But you see an attitude in Abraham that when God spoke something at night, early in the morning, he was immediate to obey.

That's what made Abraham the man of faith that he became. He rose early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water, and this was painful. Remember, it's not easy to send away your firstborn son knowing

you'll never see him again for the rest of your life.

He gave them to Hagar, put them on her shoulder and gave her the boy and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. When you turn to Galatians 4, verses 21-31, you read there a New Testament commentary on this Old Testament incident.

Galatians 4, verses 21-31. He's contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament. And he's not writing to Jews, he's writing to born-again believers who have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and he's telling them something.

The letter to Galatians teaches us one thing, that Spirit-baptized, born-again believers can live under the Old Covenant. In fact, the vast majority of Spirit-baptized, born-again believers today are living under the Old Covenant. They haven't understood grace.

They haven't understood the New Covenant. And here, Paul says, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tell me, he says, you who want to be under the Old Covenant, don't you listen to what the Old Covenant says, or what is written in the Old Testament. What is written in the Old Testament? He says it is written that Abraham had two sons.

One by the bondwoman, Hagar, and the other by the free woman, Sarah. You know that Hagar was a slave, that's why she's called a bondwoman. And so he says the Old Covenant is like that, it always leads to bondage.

When you're married to the law, it's like Abraham being married to Hagar. That's a wrong marriage. But the son by the bondwoman, verse 23, was born according to the flesh.

According to the flesh means with Abraham's own strength. He accomplished something, he produced the Nishmael. But the son by the free woman was not born through Abraham's strength, because Sarah could not have a child.

It was the supernatural working of God. And if we can understand something here, that the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is this. The Old Covenant is what we can do naturally.

Abraham, without any help from God, could produce a son through Hagar. The New Covenant is what is done supernaturally. That is what we cannot do in our own strength.

God mightily enables us. Sarah had faith to do something in her body when everybody had written her off as a hopeless kid. That is the New Covenant.

And if in our life we are accomplishing only what can be done naturally, we have to check up whether it is the Old Covenant. I've heard of Buddha, that there was a time when somebody came and irritated him and he told a man something like this, he said that, You can't make me angry. If you had come to me ten years ago, you could have made me angry.

Today you can't make me angry. Think, that Buddha, you couldn't make Buddha angry. You couldn't irritate him.

He didn't have the Holy Spirit, he wasn't a believer, but you couldn't irritate him. The man had practiced self-control to such an extent that he managed to overcome anger and irritation, which you and I know is so difficult to overcome. He had no life, but he was wholehearted about overcoming anger.

I'd say he was more wholehearted than 99% of believers. Though he went about it the wrong way, but that was an Ishmael. It looks like the real thing.

Hinduism has got that. Yoga has got that. Counterfeit.

That which by my own strength I have accomplished. But what Jesus does in us through the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit is far superior, not inferior, superior to what Buddha had. Not only can you not make me offended and angry with you, I won't even have that attitude inside of me.

It's a total death. Very few are wholehearted enough to enter the New Covenant. We speak about wholehearted believers, and when we think of a whole lot of believers as wholehearted, it usually indicates the low level of our own wholeheartedness that we think of so many believers as wholehearted.

I've heard people say, so-and-so is a wholehearted person. Yeah, that's a pretty good indication of that person's own level of wholeheartedness, that he thinks somebody else is wholehearted. Very few are really wholehearted.

A wholehearted person is one who comes to victory over sin, not one who continues to be defeated by it. There's a lack of wholeheartedness when a person is continually defeated. It says here, the son by the free woman is through the promise, and that teaches us of the New Testament, the New Covenant that promises us the divine nature, that promises us that sin will not have dominion over us.

He says this contains an allegory. In other words, he's saying that Ishmael and Isaac are a type. Hagar and Sarai are a type.

These women, Hagar and Sarai, are two covenants. One proceeding from Mount Sinai, the Old Covenant, bearing children like Ishmael, who are to be slaves. This is Hagar.

And this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, corresponding to the present earthly Jerusalem, which is venerated by the Jews, and she is in slavery with her children. That means all the Jews and all those who have lived under the Old Covenant are in slavery. But the Jerusalem which is above, we know from Revelation 21 that that is the bride of Christ.

He says she is our mother, like Sarah was the mother of Isaac. She is our mother, for it is written, this is from Isaiah 54 and verse 1, Rejoice, barren woman, Sarah, who does not dare. Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor, that is Sarah, for more are the children of the desolate than are the one who has a husband.

And you, brethren, like Isaac, are children of the promise. Not children of the flesh, but children of the promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so it is now also, he says, the Jews will persecute the Christians, and those who are fleshly-minded Old Covenant Christians will always persecute and call as heretics those who proclaim the New Covenant and who seek to enter into the New Covenant.

That's not surprising, that Christians who live according to the flesh will persecute the Christians who live according to the spirit. And the Christians who live according to the flesh are like mighty 19-year-old Ishmael, and the Christians who live according to the spirit are like weak 5-year-old Isaac. It's always like that.

But what does the Scripture say? The Scripture says, cast out the bondwomen and her sons. God doesn't accept them. Cast out the people who live according to the Old Covenant.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that it's not just about living according to the Old Covenant? For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir. A Christian who lives according to the Old Covenant shall not be an heir with Christ, with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

It is for freedom, chapter 5, verse 1, that Christ set us free. Therefore, keep standing firm, and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Slavery to sin, or slavery to some earthly so-called Christian tradition, or slavery to anything.

Jesus Christ has come to set us free. And yet multitudes of Christians are enslaved to sin, enslaved to traditions, enslaved to fears, enslaved to superstitions, all types of things. They don't know what it is to be free.

And so that's what we learn from Genesis chapter 21, that God has called us to freedom. And it is not surprising if those who are according to the flesh persecute those who are according to the Spirit. God's word calls us to cast out that Old Covenant, and to open our hearts to the New Covenant, to live according to God's promise, and not according to our own strength after the flesh.

Genesis 21. We read here about Hagar and Ishmael. The water in the skin, verse 15, was used up, and she left the boy under one of the bushes.

And she went and sat down opposite, saying, Don't let me see the boy die. And she sat opposite him and lifted up her voice and wept a second time. The first time was earlier in Genesis 16.

And again God heard the lad crying, and the angel of God appeared to Hagar from heaven and said to her, What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. He knows every detail of what is happening to us. He hears every crying, even from someone like Hagar and Ishmael.

Arise, lift up the lad and hold him by the hands and see the statement God made to Hagar. I will make a great nation of him. Do you know why the Arabs have so much power and so much oil and so much money? It's because God said so.

Otherwise they'd never have it. It was just because Ishmael happened to be a child of Abraham. God said, All right, for Abraham's sake I'll bless him, not spiritually, materially.

All the holy material blessings that God can give to descendants, he can't. Spiritual blessing we have to receive individually. But material blessing God may give to a child because the father was God-fearing.

And so Ishmael's seed has become a great nation just like God said today. Everything is there in God's word. Verse 19, Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.

There's a lesson there for us from Hagar. When Hagar was discouraged, saying, There is no water, God has forsaken me. Just nearby was the answer to her prayer.

Think of that. Very often when you're discouraged, all you need to ask is God to open your eyes and the answer to your prayer is very near. We need not be like Hagar.

We need not give up hope and get discouraged. Ask God to open your eyes. The answer to your prayer is very near.

She didn't even have to walk. There where she sat opposite the child, right there she was discouraged and fed up and all she needed was, she didn't even have to walk, she had to just open her eyes. She saw a well.

God didn't create that well all of a sudden. No. He doesn't say God created a well there in the desert all of a sudden.

The well was already there. God just opened her eyes to say, There's no need to be discouraged and keep on asking me. The answer is right here.

Why are you getting discouraged? There's a well of water. You don't have to die. What a lesson.

How very often when we think God is not with us and he doesn't care, the answer is so close at hand. Verse 20, And God was with the lad, and he grew, and he lived in the wilderness, and he became an archer, and he lived in the wilderness of Theron, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt, because she came from Egypt. It came about at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham saying, God is with you in all that you do.

Before I want to go on to that, I just want to mention one thing. You see, I wonder if we were in God's place, whether we would have blessed Ishmael and Hagar. We see something of the tremendous mercy of God there, that even that child that was born out of Abraham's failure, God blessed.

God's heart is so much bigger than we can imagine. There's a largeness in God's attitude towards people. We are all so narrow-minded, so narrow-hearted.

God's heart is large. He can bless many people. And He blesses many people today who are not wholehearted.

Of course, He can't bless them spiritually. He still blesses them materially. They're foolish if they think that is everything.

But God is so kind in these earthly matters towards people whom we wouldn't think should be shown any kindness. That which came out of Abraham's failure, God is merciful. And Abimelech comes to Abraham in verse 22 and says, God is with you in all that you do.

How did he know that? It's a tremendous thing if somebody can come to us and say, Brother, God is really with you. They had seen that this man had trusted God and changed his name to a father of a great multitude, and they laughed at him for a long time, and all of a sudden they found the possibility of a great multitude coming up when they saw his son. They said, Boy, this man, he really has received what he confessed to all this time.

That was a tremendous miracle because it was a well-known fact around there that Sarah was barren, and he had heard of the birth of Isaac and recognized that God was with Abraham. He says, Now swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity. According to the

kindness I have shown you, you shall show to me.

And Abraham said, I swear it. But Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. And Abimelech said, I didn't know about this.

Now there's something about this we notice here. See, Abimelech's servants had obviously seized that well of water from Abraham's servants quite some time ago. They must have come and told Abraham that Abimelech's servants have seized that well of water which belongs to us.

And think that Abraham didn't go and kick up a fight with Abimelech. He just left it. He says, If God wants me to have it, maybe one day I'll meet Abimelech and I'll be able to talk to him and I'll get the well of water.

Think of an attitude like that. And one day, sure enough, Abimelech comes along and says, God is with you. And Abraham has the opportunity to tell him, Yeah, I just thought I'd tell you about this well of water that some months ago your servants had taken.

He says, I didn't know about it. And they made a covenant and Abimelech returned that well of water. There's a lesson there for us in situations where we have a tendency to go and fight with someone for some right of ours.

Like Abraham, we can trust God and say, Lord, I don't want to go and kick up a fight about that earthly thing. If it's your will, one day I'll get an opportunity and I'll be able to talk to that person in a peaceful atmosphere. If you want me to have that well, I'll get it.

God's got control over everything. He can make Abimelech come around to you. That's easy, easy for God to do that.

And you can find applications for that situation in different situations in life. Don't go to kick up a fight. That's the basic principle.

And then Abraham made a covenant there. In verse 31, they called that place Beersheba, because the two of them took an oath and they made a covenant. And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree, verse 33, at Beersheba.

And sure enough, he wants to thank the Lord. Lord, thank you that you brought that well back for me without my having to make a fight there. He called on the name of the Lord.

We see from all this that Abraham was basically a peace-loving man. He would not fight with people, even if somebody grabbed his well. And you know, a well was a very important thing in those days.

It was a source of supply of water, which meant so much for families, for hundreds of servants that he had, for so much cattle. A well was a very important thing. It was not just a luxury.

You could say it was a necessity. But he would not fight over it. He just moved away peacefully.

And you read later on that Abraham had a son called Isaac. In Genesis 26, you see that Isaac behaves in exactly the same way. Where did he learn to behave like that? From his father.

He saw that his father never fought for wells. Isaac grows up and he doesn't fight for wells. What an inheritance Abraham gave Isaac.

Chapter 22. Another phrase. It came about after these things.

And when you see a statement like then or after these things, we must ask ourselves, after which things? After Abimelech came to Abraham and said, brother, God is with you. And Abraham was just about ready to turn up his collar and to think, yeah, I'm really the man of God in these parts. The prophet, even the king recognized that.

God said, okay, we got to give you a little test now, so that you don't get any high thoughts about yourself. God is so faithful. Have you had that experience? If God loves you, I'm sure you've had it.

If you've gone through some situation which has tended to puff you up, and sure enough God's lined up something for you soon after that to deflate you, so that you don't lose your salvation. I've found that many times. I say, thank you, Lord.

You are so good. So good. After these things, God tested Abraham.

He says, well, I'm not particularly bothered about Abimelech's testimony. I'd like to find out what you're really like. And it's interesting that that test comes after Abimelech's statement that God does not care about Abimelech's testimony.

Do we know that? That any man, say some older brother has come to you and says, brother, God's really with you. Like a fool, you took that so much to heart, that you've thought about it for years after that. You need to read this verse.

But we read here that God, Abraham, passed that test too. And that's the wonderful thing. It's not Abimelech's testimony that counts, it's God's testimony.

And you find in chapter 22, God gave a testimony about Abraham, and that is the only thing that matters. And the contrast you see there, between Abimelech's testimony and God's testimony, one is worth nothing. You can throw it in the garbage pit.

God tested him, and Abraham passed the test. Abraham, he said, here I am. And he said, now take your son, your only son, because you've already obeyed me and sent away your other one, you've got only one son now, whom you love.

Go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering in one of the mountains of which I'll tell you. This is more difficult than sending him away. Sending away Ishmael is one thing, but to kill your own son with your own hands is quite another thing.

God leads us on to greater tests than we have passed in the past. And in chapter 11, God had to separate Abraham from his father. You know, his father died, and then Abraham moved on.

In chapter 22, God has to separate Abraham from this inordinate attachment to his son. And there's a lesson there for us. We know that God was testing a number of things here.

He was testing Abraham's faith, his obedience, his fear of God. His wholehearted love for God. Everything was tested in this one act, as we can see.

Think of one thing, and that is that he was testing whether God was first in Abraham's life. Is there something other than God that you value? Maybe your son Isaac. Do you value him more than me, so that

when I tell you to do something, you love your son so much that you can't do it? That can happen.

God says something, and a person loves his father and mother so much that he can't obey God. Or he loves his brother and sister so much that he can't obey God. Or he loves his wife so much that he can't obey God.

Or she loves her husband so much that she can't obey God. Or they love their children so much that they can't obey God. We can say that Isaac was Abraham's favorite son.

He had only one son, and that is the darling of his heart. And we are tested concerning the darlings of our heart. If you have children, and one of them is the darling of your heart, be honest.

Many parents are foolish in this area. One of their children is the darling of their heart. And because of that one, their parents cannot be disciples of Jesus Christ.

I have seen that so many times. And I have also seen that people have heard these exhortations, and they still are not able to cleanse themselves from this inordinate attachment to one of their children more than to the others. So they get stuck in Genesis 22, verse 1. Never go beyond that.

They are stuck there. We ought to be free, brothers and sisters, from inordinate attachment to anything or anyone. And that which we value the most is the one we are attached to, which we need to cut.

God didn't ask Abraham to kill Ishmael, but He asked him to kill Isaac. Think of that. Yeah, there is a lesson there for us.

What does Abraham do? Great man that he was, without any exhortation, without any challenge. Verse 3. He rose early in the morning. The same old habit.

It is a habit. This fellow who took six months to obey God twenty years ago, even today he will take six months to obey God in something. This fellow who rose up immediately and obeyed God twenty years ago, today also he rises up immediately and obeys God.

It is a very dangerous thing when you converts are slow in obeying God. When you hear the truth and you are slow to respond, the chances are all your life you will be like that. Be quick.

Don't discuss. He didn't even discuss it with Sarah. Sarah may have given another opinion.

He just rose up in the morning and went on. He said, I have got to do what God says. There is no need to discuss with my wife whether it is a reasonable thing or not.

It sounds so unreasonable. It is 100% against reason to kill your own son. Isn't that against reason? If there is anything which is 100% against reason, it is this, to kill your own son.

No, he lived by faith, not by reason. And he saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac and he split wood for the burnt offering and rose and went to the place which God had told him. God had told him to go to the land of Moriah.

And it says on the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Have you ever wondered why God didn't tell Abraham just to sacrifice him around the corner or in some place one mile away? Three days he had to walk. Three days for many reasons.

And I believe one reason is God wanted Abraham to think about it. Sit down and count the cost. Or while you are walking, count the cost.

For three days you can think about it and you can turn back. See, God doesn't want this. He wants obedience instantaneously, but he doesn't want us to act without counting the cost.

He says, think about it. Think about what you are going to lose if you follow me. There are many things in life that you cannot do.

Many comforts that you cannot have. Many pleasures that you cannot have. Many people including your own relatives whom you will have to offend and hurt.

Think about it. Don't rush. The people who rush without thinking are the people who rush back also in some time of difficulty or testing or persecution.

But the people who count the cost and say, Lord it's worth it, they are the ones who stick it out till the very end. So God gave Abraham three days to think about it. And every time I can imagine Abraham must have said, I can't understand it, but it's worth it to obey God.

It sure is. And it says here, on the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. And Abraham said to his young men, stay here with the donkey.

I and the lad will go up to this mountain. And we, we, I and the lad, will come back. We are just going to worship and we'll come back.

This is the first place in the Bible where the word worship comes. People talk about worship meeting. Abraham had a worship meeting.

But it wasn't the cheap frothy thing that is conducted in charismatic circles. Abraham didn't go there just to clap and dance on the mountain top. That would have been easy.

He says, we are going to worship. What was worship first time in the Bible? Giving up that which was most dear to him. Saying, Lord, I love you more than even that.

That is worship. And there are very few people who live in that spirit of worship. It is a fantastic counterfeit that the devil has called worship today.

He'll just make people clap their hands and jump around a bit and sing a few jumpy choruses and say, we had a worship meeting this morning. Garbage! They may have thanked the Lord, but that was no worship meeting. Compare that with Abraham, with a pain in his heart, loving his child, going up and saying, I'm going to kill him to prove that I love God more than my son.

That is worship. When you've gone through experiences like that, where we've given up to God that which is most precious to us. We've been willing to hurt a father and mother who has loved us so much, because we want to obey God.

That's worship. When everybody else is going around pleasing them. When we stand up for the truth when it hurts people whom we love so dearly.

That's worship. How many people worship like that? How many people are willing to give up something which is so precious to them? That is worship. When nothing on earth has any value for me, when your job doesn't have any value for you, when your profession, your education doesn't have any value for you, but God is everything, then you are a worshipper.

And Abraham says, he says, I and the lad will go yonder and we will both worship and we will both return. How did he say that? How did he say that we will both return when he knew that he's going to sacrifice him on top of the mountain? It's a very interesting question. We say, well, he must have been just bluffing.

He wasn't bluffing. Hebrews 11 says he was speaking in faith. Turn to Hebrews 11, verse 17 to 19.

It says, Abraham, when he was tested by faith, Abraham, when he was tested, Hebrews 11, 17, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. It was he to whom it was said, in Isaac your seed shall be called. How can my seed be called in Isaac if he's going to die? He considered, here is where his faith comes, that God is able to raise men even from the dead.

Do you know the first person who had faith in the resurrection? Abraham. He had faith that God can raise somebody from the dead. Has God raised anybody from the dead up till now, Abraham? No, he hasn't done that yet.

I haven't heard of anybody being raised from the dead yet. Abraham says, but I believe God can raise people even from the dead. From which also he received him back as a type.

In other words, virtually Isaac was dead when he laid him on the altar. And in a sense he got him back from the dead. That's why he told the servant, we'll come back.

I'm going to kill Isaac up there, but God has to raise him from the dead, because God has said that in Isaac my seed will be called. So maybe I'll kill him and God will raise him up. Because Isaac, my seed has to be called in Isaac.

God has said that. He was so sure that what God has said he has to do. Fine, we'll go along and we'll come back.

Genesis 22, verse 6, and Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. The two of them walked on together. And you can imagine all that is going on in Abraham's heart at this time.

The pain, the struggle. And he's saying, Lord, it's worth it. It's worth it.

I'll obey you. If we have been through that, we can know. Lord, I'll obey you.

I'll put you first. And Abraham took the wood and they walked together and Isaac spoke to Abraham. This must have been so painful when he asked Abraham this question.

My father, here I am, my son, he said. Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham must have choked back the tears when he replied, God will provide himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. So the two of them walked on together.

Then they came to the place which God had told him. And Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Isaac was a grown man.

He wasn't a young boy, because it says here in verse six that Abraham laid the wood, all that wood, on Isaac's shoulder. He couldn't have been a little boy that Abraham put all that wood on his shoulder. If Isaac was going to carry all this wood up the mountain, he must have been in his twenties, perhaps twenty-five year old, strong, hefty young man.

And when Abraham ties him on the altar, verse nine, he binds Isaac on the altar. Isaac could have resisted, but he doesn't. There we see a picture of a submissive son, of the way Abraham had brought up his son, that when he puts him on the altar at the age of twenty-five and says, Isaac understands now that there's no lamb, I'm going to be killed, he submits.

It's fantastic. Just like God said, I know Abraham will command his household after him. It's tremendous, brothers and sisters, if we fathers can produce children like this, that at the age of twenty-five, we tie them down to an altar to kill them and they just say, that's fine, Dad, I trust you.

Tremendous. Tremendous if we can be fathers like that. And Abraham stretched out his hand to kill him and immediately the angel stops him and says, Abraham, Abraham.

We can stop there, we know that God saved Isaac from that death, but we can learn something about Abraham's attitude. He raised his hand, there was a knife coming down to kill him and God stops him. This was no play acting, he wasn't pretending, hoping that at the last minute God would say no.

No, Lord, I love you and I approve it. I believe there are many, many things in this chapter that we could learn from Abraham. His instantaneous obedience, his faith that God has to keep his word, his fear of God, his not consulting his reason or anybody else, exactness in his obedience, going where God told him to go, counting the cost, putting God above his own son, giving up that which is dear, a son brought up to learn obedience.

Let's pray that God will give us grace to follow in his footsteps.

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