

08.24.25

Genesis

Chapter 13 - God's Patient Oversight

Welcome Back (vs. 1-4)

Genesis 13:1-4: So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

The calling of Abraham is seen in Genesis 12. It is the calling of a people to represent God, to worship God, to be a testimony to the world of God. Why is that necessary? Well, I think Genesis has already proven why it's necessary. Because the thoughts of man are continually evil and left to himself, he would not choose God.

Go back all the way to Genesis 6 and you'll see the condition of the world right before the flood. What would happen if God just left us alone, if in fact He wouldn't bear witness to Himself, but He says, "Let's live and let live; let men do whatever he wants to do. I'll just stay out of the picture." What would happen? Well, I think a clear picture is given to us in Genesis 6. In which, though Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, according to Genesis 7:1, Noah was the only one on the face of the earth. Think about that. That's a magnificent statement when you consider. Once again, one of the reasons why you don't want to go with the popular vote. They're usually wrong. So, as it goes into the passage in Chapter 6, it says this, (Genesis 6:11) "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence."

See the words there, and we've already talked about this, but that's where we get the word "hamas". What does that word "hamas" come from? It actually is the word "violence". It is an old Hebrew word which makes reference to not only a sense of violence, but a sense of

cruelty with a bent to injustice, and that's the way the world was, if you look at the passage.

It goes on and says,

(Genesis 6:12) “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.”

(Genesis 6:13) Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.”

In other words, “We've got to wash this stuff out.”

Because as it was clearly put in verse 5,

(Genesis 6:5) “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was...”

Calamitous, hurtful, painful, destructive. He just couldn't have one good thought in his head. Think about that. A man left to himself. Parents have tried this with their children, “We'll just let the kid go any which way they want to go and they're going to be really good kids.” No,

you're going to have mayhem. Because of the heart of man is deceitful, desperately sick, and it always goes towards that particular realm. It was the grace of God that as we begin to see His grace shower upon him, not only has He created all things for us to enjoy freely, but man begins to choose and corrupt the very good things that God gives us. In the midst of this, God is still looking to rescue humanity. I would fundamentally say, “Forget it. Just let humanity end.” God goes, “No, we're going to build an ark. We're going to preserve humanity. We're going to preserve this world. We're not giving up on man.”

So, as the passage goes on, if you look there in Chapter 6, He actually gives and makes a covenant with Abraham and His ultimate goal was to save them.

(Genesi 6:18) “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

(Genesis 6:19) And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark...”

He goes on and says, “We're going to preserve humanity. We're going to preserve creation. We're going to do this in spite of man.”

And I want to emphasize there in Genesis 7:1,

“Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.”

It was truly the grace of God that did this.

What's also to be noted, if you look in Genesis 8, God makes a commitment and makes a promise to Noah.

Noah comes and he makes an altar before the Lord, and if you look in Genesis 8:20, it reads this way,

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

(Genesis 8:21) The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

(Genesis 8:22) “While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease.””

That's actually a promise that God makes. Now, the question is, is that a conditional promise? And the answer is no. God just makes the promise, and the promises of God are unconditional in that sense and in specific ways. I say specific ways because He is going to give promises that will be attached to something and will have a condition. So, the question is, why does He give two different kinds of promises? The first, I would say that He gives unconditional promises to demonstrate His grace in spite of us. He fundamentally says, “We're not going to do this flooding thing anymore.” Well, He didn't have to promise that, but He did, and He goes on and says, “And you're going to have seasons and that's not going to stop either.” “Well, You didn't have to do that either.” “I know.” I mean, you think of Matthew 5 and it says that

God causes the rain and He causes the sun to shine on the wicked and the righteous alike. None are deserving. None of us are deserving, but God demonstrates His grace and He actually gives promises that we might in some way connect with Him by virtue of those promises. But as we go on, what we're going to see is that God is going to call out a people and He's going to get specific with the promises of them. But He's going to want some reciprocity; that is to say, He's going to want them to say, "And I make a commitment to You." If you think about it, it would be a funny way to have a relationship, marriage or otherwise, if just the one person goes, "I'm committed to you," and the other person goes, "That's nice." But what you're hoping to hear is, "And I'm committed to you." So, God begins to make promises, not only in the sense of demonstrating His unconditional love to us, but He's going to make promises that are going to be attached to us responding to Him. Now, the wonderful thing about those kind of promises is that they become very personal. That is to say, if you'll do certain things, you begin to see how God responds to you in a very personal, like with nobody else, because you decided to

do that. And we're going to see that specifically as we come with Abraham.

As we come to the passage and as Genesis 12 begins, it actually begins with God calling Abram out, and He says, "Ok, here's the deal. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to make you a blessing. I'm going to make you a great nation." All these things God is committing to regardless, at this juncture, of anything that Abraham was going to do. He was going to do that. That's a guarantee. Now, the question is, is Abram going to walk in accordance with that confidence? I mean, fundamentally what God is saying is, "Nothing's going to happen to you until this is taken care of." I mean, God's word is true. I like the way that it's put in Titus. It says it's impossible for God to lie. So, He's not going to lie. So, if He says something is going to happen. We marginalize the power of God, don't we? "I guess He's really powerful." Ok.

So, one of the great passages that I oftentimes go to is that Psalm 33, in particular, as you go through 6-9 where he says, fundamentally, by the word of the Lord the heavens were made. And I like verse 9 in particular

because it says this, “He spoke, and it was done.” I mean, who does that? I mean, the universe, He just speaks and it happens. I mean, we literally marginalize and underestimate the power of God.

I like the way the psalmist goes on to say in Psalm 8:3, he says, “When I consider the heavens and I consider the things that You made, the work of your fingers, the moon, the sun, I have to step back and go, ‘What is man that You would even think about me?’” I look at this universe and even today you have these great academics that look into the skies, and they go, “Ok, we're not alone. We're not alone.” And that their fundamental point in this is that this couldn't have been just for us. But Genesis says, “It was all for you.” And how great the lovingkindness of God. I mean, truly the heavens declare the glory of God, but the heavens are declaring not only how great He is and the great expanse, but the heavens are declaring how much He loves you. Far beyond what you could ask or think. What does that look like in a picture? A universe. How many blessings do I have? Far beyond what you could ask or think. So, God is demonstrating to us His

great love and His great fellowship, and yet there's something inside of us that goes, "I don't know if He can do that." I mean, there are things that happen in our life where we begin to minimize His power. We know, and we actually declare that God is omnipotent, that He's all powerful, and yet what does that all mean? "Well, He's powerful up to this point." All means all. In every way, in every conceivable thing, God is all powerful and nothing is too hard for Him, right? And yet here we sit.

So, as you come into Genesis 12, what does God do? Well, He calls him out and He says, "Ok, now, Abram, you're going to be the guy that points to Me, and you're going to keep telling the world, 'I follow a powerful God.'" Now, how is He going to prove this and how is He going to get Abram to come to that point? Well, I am comforted in the fact that though He calls these individuals, it's clear as you read through the Old Testament and then go into the New that these are not perfect beings. As James 5 will say, Elijah was a man with the nature just like ours, and you realize Elijah got upset too? Yeah, he wanted to kill people, he was so upset. So, have you ever felt that

intense? Jonah felt so intense that he would rather die than save somebody. “I don't want to save those people. I want them to die.” And God says, “No, we're going to save them.” But He takes those prophets through that journey in actually developing, and I like the way the promise is put in Genesis 12,

(Genesis 12:2) “And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great...”

You see that last phrase there, “I'm going to make your name great”? Which means, “We're going to make this character thing in you come out. So, we're going to make you a man of faith.” It is this process that God then begins to work. So, how does He do that? Well, He sends a famine. A famine didn't just sashay along and say, “Hey, I think I'll be a famine today.” God actually sent a famine, and a famine came into the land.

So, as the passage goes on, it seems like, as Abram does what God tells him to do, he goes into the Promised Land, everything's going really good up to this point that we know. I mean, there's no event that seems to take place

that would convey any different, and yet as he proceeds even further down south, it goes to the very end of the property in the land of Canaan that God had called him to be in.

He comes, and if you look in verse 10, the way it reads is, (Genesis 12:10) “Now there was a famine in the land...”

So, up to this point, Abraham has already talked with God. God's talked with him. Abram has talked with God. He's built an altar. He's called upon His name.

It tells us in verse 8,

(Genesis 12:8) “Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.”

So, God in the beginning talked to Abram, called him unto Himself. Now, Abram is actually calling God, and there's conversation. So, we know that we can communicate. Communication lines are open. He's available. So, there's a famine in the land? Call God. He doesn't. He doesn't call

God. He goes down to Egypt, and we're going to see him make this error not just once, but twice; not that he'll go down to Egypt, but he'll go to the Philistines.

It's very interesting, if you look in Genesis 20, it doesn't say that there was any difficulty going on, but he finds himself heading into the realm of Gerar.

(Genesis 20:1) “Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev...”

Which is basically where he was at this other text.

“... and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar.

(Genesis 20:2) Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar...”

What we're actually in is the realm of the Philistines, which is a very interesting point because Isaac, his son, will make the same mistake. If you remember at the very beginning, as he goes into Egypt at first to find some sort of relief from the famine, i.e. because of the Nile, because of the place that Egypt has a reputation of being successful even during famine. So, instead of trusting

God, instead of calling on God, he goes down to Egypt trying to work things out himself. I don't know what's going through his head. I know what goes through my head, "Maybe I can fix this myself." You start strategizing. There are 1,001 things. Instead of turning to God first, you start trying to work it out and you don't want to bother God. Maybe He's too busy, or maybe the thought is that this might be a little too difficult for Him to handle. I don't know what goes through our heads, but it's ludicrous. It really is ludicrous. Nevertheless, he goes down to Egypt and in going down to Egypt, he's still strategizing. So, he's afraid that the Pharaoh's going to kill him because his wife is so beautiful, because he's going to want his wife. So, he says to Sarah, "Tell them that you're my sister and everything will be ok." And of course, ultimately God reveals Himself to Pharaoh and he goes, "Don't touch that woman." And Pharaoh goes, "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?" And sends them out with even more goods than he ever had. So, the thought is, "Ok. I've learned my lesson."

Well, now we come to Chapter 20, and he does the same thing in the realm of Abimelech, which is the Philistine king, and one of the first things he says is, in verse 2, Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, “You're my sister.” So, Abimelech, the king, goes, “Ok, good. It's your sister. It's not your wife.” And he does the same thing again. Now, to make this even worse, of course, in this particular passage, Abimelech wakes up early, God reveals Himself to him, and Abimelech goes, “Why didn't you tell me? Why did you do this to me?” And of course, I think at this juncture, Abraham actually tries to defend himself. Have you ever done the wrong thing and tried to defend yourself?

So, he actually says in verse 12,

(Genesis 20:12) “Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother...”

“So, she actually is my sister. I can actually call her my sister.” It's called stretching the truth in case you didn't know what that was. So, he has this problem.

Well, bad enough that he does it, but then his son does the same thing, if you look in Chapter 26. One of the reasons why I'm bringing this out is that we have a pattern and the pattern is though we know the truth, we just can't seem to trust God.

(Genesis 26:1) "Now there was a famine in the land..."

Now, wait a minute. How did Chapter 12 start off? Oh, yeah, that's right. There was a famine in the land. Ok. So, we're seeing a pattern.

(Genesis 26:1) "Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham..."

So, it's actually setting the stage. It's like God going, "We've done this before."

"... So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

(Genesis 26:2) The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt..."

"Your father did that." So, he goes, "Ok. I'll go down to Gerar." We have our options, you know? God closes one

door, and we go, “Ok, that means He doesn't want to go there but that doesn't mean He doesn't want me to go here.” Yeah, well, ok.

(Genesis 26:3) “Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you...”

“I'm going to take care of your descendants. I made a promise to your dad. I'm making the same promise to you. I'm going to come through, believe Me. Trust Me. I'm going to multiply your descendants because your father ultimately obeyed Me.”

(Genesis 26:6) “So Isaac lived in Gerar.

(Genesis 26:7) When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister” ...”

So, we're not learning anything. What's interesting to me is that here he is going to Gerar, which is the land of the Philistines, and that's actually the same thing that happens with David. If you remember, 1 Samuel 27, in which he says to himself, “I guess I'm not going to get this kingdom. Saul's going to live forever. He's going to kill me.” So, where does he end up going? He goes to the

Philistines. So, what Scripture is telling us is that oftentimes we'll even go to an enemy before we'll go to God. I don't know if you're catching that. I mean, we'll go to any other resource other than God, even an enemy, and David certainly does that.

I get a chuckle out of Chapter 42, if you look there with me, where there was a famine in the land and God had caused the famine again during the time of Joseph. Of course, God had sent Joseph ahead by virtue of man's cruelty. So, as God sends Joseph ahead, I could just see literally God is saying, "I know what man's going to do. He's going to go down to Egypt. So, why don't I just send Joseph ahead of time?" And Jacob turns to his sons, and he goes, "Hey, you know, there's a famine right now, and what do we do? Well, I have an idea. Let's go to Egypt." But the way that Jacob says it to his sons, I just love it.

(Genesis 42:1) "Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?"

"Go down to Egypt."

God knows where we are. He knows our inclinations. He knows our predispositions, and He can turn what we would mean for evil into good. God will actually find us in the haunts of where we go to do the wrong thing and show His grace there, and that's exactly what He does.

In fact, as you go to Chapter 46, if you look at Jacob, and I could imagine, he's probably wrestling with himself, "Should I go? Shouldn't I go? I already told my sons to go." So, if you look in Chapter 46, God reveals Himself to Israel, to Jacob, and it says in verse 2,

(Genesis 46:2) "God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

(Genesis 46:3) He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt..."

"I've got everything worked out. I have a welcoming committee there for you. I'm going to take care of you. I've already sent your son there. You think he was lost, but it's Joseph." And you can see that God had it all worked out. It's telling us that even though we're rebellious, God is working on our behalf. He sees the heart that wants to do the right thing. Abraham wasn't

overtly rebellious, but he is going to stumble and fall as we all are. As Scripture says, the Righteous falls seven times, but he keeps getting back up. The difference is that we don't want to do the wrong thing; we want to do what's right. God says, "I see that heart, but you're going to fall." The question is, when we fall, what do we do and what do we have to look forward to? Because the great fear is that "God's really, really mad at me, and I better not go out in a storm." Because the thought is, "That lightning bolt is just waiting for me when I walk out that door." And we couldn't read it more wrong. What God is wanting to demonstrate to us is the power of His grace, and He's going to take us through difficult times and we're going to see things and we're going to do things that we'll stumble. We'll stumble, we'll do things that we know are wrong, but we're just not there in our faith, and God says, "We're going to grow that." And we know that God grows it in Abraham's life to the degree in which we come to Genesis 22, and he takes his own son and lays him on an altar. Wow. I mean, he goes from, "She's my sister," to "I'm going to lay my son in altar." That's a big leap, and this is part of the process.

So, as we come to Chapter 13, it is the beginning of Abram actually going back home. Now, what's interesting is, we know there was a famine in the land. We know that it's within short order that he comes in contact with the Pharaoh. Pharaoh tries to confiscate his wife, thinking that it was his sister, and God reveals Himself, and says, "Don't touch her." And then the Pharaoh calls him, and he goes, "You need to get out of here." And he literally pushes him out of the country. So, the question is, where does he go? Well, I guess he'd go further south into Africa, but he doesn't. He goes back home where God had called him. Where did God say? "I want you to be in the land of Canaan." Ok, so, where did really this communication with God start? Well, that's where he's going to end up.

So, if you look with me in Chapter 13, it reads this way within the passage,

(Genesis 13:1) "So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev..."

So, it's an interesting way that this is put in Genesis 13:1,

"So Abram went up from Egypt..."

See that? Do you remember the way it starts off in Genesis 12:10?

(Genesis 12:10) “... so Abram went down to Egypt...”

And the word for Egypt is “*miṣrayim*,” which that particular Hebrew word makes reference to that which is like a ditch, two ditches; probably the picture of the Nile, I guess in some way, but it has a sense of entrenchment. It's an interesting picture in which one is going down into entrenchments, away from God. Of course, ultimately, Jerusalem will be that place where it doesn't matter where you are in the face of the earth, you'll always go up to Jerusalem. So, anyway, it gives this interesting picture, and let me just say this, “So Abraham went up,” that's where we get the word “*‘ālā*”. We have people actually call themselves “Allah” and what they mean is, “We're the ascending one.” So, he's actually going up from where he had been. He had gone down to trust in his own ways, and because of that, he reaped a rebuke from an ungodly person, the Pharaoh. Just to let you know, God will oftentimes use ungodly people in your life to criticize you. But you know what you need to do? Thank God. “Thank

You. You didn't let me get away with it.” I mean, one of the evidences that your God's children is that He doesn't let you get away with stuff. I mean, other people get away with murder; you can't get away with anything. You steal a pencil and God's going to call you on it. But you go, “Thanks God.”

So, it goes on and says,

(Genesis 13:1) “So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev...”

To the southern country.

“... he and his wife...”

Scripture's just in a very subtle way saying that God's not going, “I told you so,” or anything like that. But He's just going, “It's his wife.” It doesn't say, “he and his sister”. It's “he and his wife”.

“... and all that belonged to him...”

You would think, “I did something wrong. God's going to take everything away from me.” God says, “Nothing's taken away from him.” In fact, he's leaving with more stuff than he ever had. If you remember, the Pharaoh

gives him camels and horses and all these kinds of things, and now he's richer than he's ever been. You go, “Well, I'm going to sin then, because if you sin and you get richer, I'm going to go for that.” What Scripture is telling us is that we're waiting for the other shoe to drop, but God's dropping blessings on us, and He wants us to proclaim the mercies of God. He wants us to proclaim the grace of God. How do you do that? Well, He's going to be gracious to you. What was the promise that He made to Abram? “I'm going to bless you. In spite of yourself, I'm going to bless you.” So, you see the blessings.

It says in verse 2, just in case you missed it,

(Genesis 13:2) “Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.”

How did that happen? God didn't take stuff away from him. “I give my life to God, He's just going to make me miserable.” Not one good thing is He going to withhold from you. That doesn't mean that you're all going to be millionaires. I mean, that's not the promise of God, but the promise of God is, everything that is good for you, He'll abundantly supply. He's not trying to take things

away from you, and you say to yourself, “Well, I really messed up. I really messed up. I don't deserve anything.” You never deserved anything. It's the evil one that continues to tell us that God is mean, but God, His lovingkindness is from everlasting to everlasting. He's misrepresented. As He's misrepresented in His power, He's misrepresented in His lovingkindness.

(Genesis 13:3) “He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning...”

See where we're going? Because, if you go back to Chapter 12, it says this,

(Genesis 12:8) “Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.”

He's actually going back to where he called upon the name of the Lord. In some way, he's fundamentally saying, “You know what? I should have talked to God before I went.” Now, once again, I just want to emphasize

there was a famine in the land. Why is there not a famine now? Because he obeyed God. Could it have been that easy? See. No, no. We go into the strategy. We go into trying to manipulate the circumstances, and God says, “If you just stay here, I'll take care of it. I'll take you in and through the famine. I'll take you through the waters.” “Those waters are in our way. We'll never cross.” “I'll just part them.” See, God is able to do these things.

(Genesis 13:3) “He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai.”

Now, it's an interesting picture, once again, and I want to emphasize the name, “Bethel,” the city is actually not named that at this juncture. However, in retrospect, as Moses is recording this, God has given him this. He's saying, “This will actually become the place of the house of God.” “Bethel,” “Beth,” meaning “house,” and “el,” meaning short for “Elohim,” God. It's the house of God. Sometimes you see synagogues and you'll see that “Bethel”. That's the house of God. So, what we have is a place where God met Abram. Now, to the other side that

he's looking at is Ai. It's an interesting stark contrast, because “Ai” literally means “ruinous heap”. So, you have a choice, it's an interesting picture, do you want to live in the house of God or in a ruinous heap? And I go, I'll take the house every time. It's fundamentally what God is calling us to.

(Genesis 13:4) “to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there...”

Oh, now we call upon the name of the Lord, and you know, the wonderful thing is that He answers. You've messed up, you've done the wrong thing, you've made a wrong turn, you've gone the wrong path, and then you come back, and you call upon the name of the Lord and literally, He answers. It reminds me of that passage in Jeremiah, “Call unto Me, and I'll show you great and mighty things which you never imagined.” God has great things for you. The evil one wants to keep you from calling on God. He wants to keep you from the altar because the altar is a place in which you make a commitment. There's nothing that says in verse 8 that

God said to Abram, "I want you to build Me an altar," any more than there's anything that says to Noah, "You need to build an altar. They both built the altar because they were full of gratitude for what God had done. God had rescued Noah, rescued his family, he rescued life on the earth, and Noah goes, "I've got to stop here. I've got to give Him thanks." And it is a recognition, but it is more than that because it is a giving of a sacrifice. The whole concept of "altar" actually always has with it a slaying of something or a sacrifice or something. What that is, is a picture of you not only accepting the promise of God, but tying yourself to that promise in a bind, and this takes us to the second part of promises, not only does God give promises that are unconditional, has nothing to do with you, but He gives promises that are very personal to you and contingent upon you responding so that you begin to say to Him, "I bind myself to that promise, I'll commit myself to that promise." So, what we have in the passage is that he goes back to a place of not only God's promise, but of God's presence where he talks to God. It's God calling us back and He says, "Come back to Me, come back to Me." Always with arms open wide.

You think of the passage in 1 John, where he says, “Look, if you say that you have no sin, you're just lying. But if you'll confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins.” It doesn't say if you confess your sins, He's going to let you have it; it doesn't say He's going to make you pay for it. He's already paid for it. Just confess your sins. We could have open communication, and we can have a relationship. So, really, what you're doing within the text is you're committing when you're building this altar and you're coming back to this altar, you're saying, “I'm going to take You at Your word. You say You're going to protect me, You say you're going to keep me, You say You're going to bless me, and I'm going to be thankful for this.” And an altar, once again, is a very graphic way of you demonstrating your thanks before God, and it's a way in which you call upon Him, “And I'm going to acknowledge you.”

Remember Proverbs 3:5-6, right?

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart

And do not lean on your own understanding.

(Proverbs 3:6) In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.”

“I'm going to acknowledge You in all my ways.” There's a commitment that's actually happening at the altar. Now, God will ultimately bring him in Chapter 22, in which he'll lay his only son on the altar, and God will say, “I can see you trust Me.” “I'll put My Son on the altar for you.” And it's a wonderful picture of God's not taking advantage of our trust, but bringing us to the point of saying, “I can trust God for anything.” So, when we come to Him and we call upon God, we believe that He's going to answer us, and we believe that He's going to take care of us. He's already promised. What do you think the whole cross thing is about? It's about God's love that was poured out for us. Is there anything that He's withholding? Once again, Romans 8 makes it very clear, if “He spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how would He not with Him freely give us all things?” But what is God wanting you to do? He's wanting you to come back to the place of your commitment, and what you're going to find is that as you begin to tie yourself with the promises of

God, you're going to see God work in your life in a personal way. That's part of the process of God giving promises with contingencies on “Now, you have to do something.” For instance, Malachi, God says, “Bring the whole tithe in and see if I don't open the windows of heaven, and the blessings of God pour out.” Now, what He's saying is, “Wouldn't you like to see this personally? Wouldn't you like to hold My hand in this?” I mean, the wonderful thing to me about promises is that you feel His presence by virtue of you doing something and you see God fulfilling. You take Him at his word.

We read the passage in Matthew Chapter 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and I'll take care of everything else.” Listen, I've had moments in my life where I was trying to figure out how I was going to make ends meet, how I was going to do certain things, and I could just hear the voice of God through Scripture going, “Are you seeking Me first? Are you seeking Me first?” And finally, I go, “Ok, I'm going to seek You first.” You just clear the desk, and you go, “I'm just going to seek you first.” And then you just watch. I mean, the “just will

live by faith,” right? It's not like the world. Don't look at the world, and say, “Well, look how they make money.” We don't make money the same way, but we get taken care of by obeying God. We go to work, we work hard, not for money; we work hard so that we might demonstrate the character and nature of Christ. So, we work as unto the Lord. Scripture says you do all your work as unto Him, and we believe that He's going to take care of us. We don't even have to ask for a raise. Do we? You would never even have to ask for raise because you're doing everything as unto God. Is it true? Try it. See, if you'll try it, those promises will actually unite you to God. In a way that way you feel more comforted by that. You'll go, “Hey, this stuff works.” You know where it says, “Be anxious for nothing,” right? “But with prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God's presence will be with you.” Really? I'd like to see that. As you begin to do that, you feel not only His hand pulling you up from the difficult times, but you feel His arms comforting you in the realm. That's the wonderful thing of the promises.

Just in ending, if you look with me in Romans 8, which is one of those great texts that really calls us to the relationship.

It says this,

(Romans 8:14) “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

(Romans 8:15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again...”

In other words, we're not operating in the realm of “have to's,” and “I'm afraid if I don't do the right thing, I'd be punished.” We don't live in that realm.

It goes on to say,

“...but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

(Romans 8:16) The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

(Romans 8:17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”

Watch the phrase here. There's an “if” there. You see the “if” clause? This is a promise that's attached to something

so that you can see the power of God. This is you, in a way, going back to the altar and saying, “Ok, You've told me I'm blessed. Now, I'm going to experience that myself.” So, you commit your life to Him.

The way it reads is,

“... if indeed we suffer with Him...”

You're putting yourself on the altar. You're saying, “I believe Your promise. You said You're going to take care of me. I'm going to put myself on the altar, and I'm going to watch that happen.” And you're going to sense the presence of God in your life like you've never sensed it before. “If I go back, I've messed up too many times. I've already done some wrong turns. God will never accept me.” You know, the interesting thing about this chapter, how it opens up, this is how it doesn't open up, “I knew you would mess up.” You don't see anything in the passage in which God goes, “Let me just remind you, you've already messed up here.” In fact, he's going to mess up again, almost the same way, and God doesn't even bring it up. He doesn't even bring it up. Scripture tells us that He removes our sins as far as the east is from

the west and what God is demonstrating to us is, “You can trust Me because I'm not a vindictive God. I'm wanting to save you. Quit resisting Me. I'm not here to condemn you.” That’s John 3, right? I mean, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” The story has never changed, and God is calling us.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and how You minister to us and comfort us through these passages. We realize that we're prone to wander and we realize that we're prone to try to strategize and manipulate our situations, to work out for ourselves. We blame You for our troubles, and yet we're the ones that have gone astray. But nevertheless, You're still there with open arms. You're still there, willing to talk to us if we'll just go back to the altar, back to the place in which we call upon

You, back to the place in which we say we trust You, back to a place in which we believe that You're good to us and we at least start in the realm of giving You thanks for all that You've done for us. As we do that, we then are drawn to place ourselves on that altar. We're now committing to You, and we realize that this is where we begin to enjoy the blessings. Truly, all the blessings are there. They've been promised. They will happen. As the children of Israel went into the Promised Land, but how they could not enjoy those blessings till they committed to them.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. What we're asking you to do is come home. Come back. Come to the house of God. Don't go to the place of ruin. Come to the house of God. Make that decision to trust in Him. Make the decision to give Him thanks. Make the decision to believe that He has good for you, that nothing, as Romans will go on to say, could ever separate you from His love, not even you and your stupid mistakes; that God is calling you to get things right. Let's come home.