

05.17.26

Genesis

Chapter 22 - God's Test of Devotion

Proof of Devotion (vs. 4-10)

Genesis 22:4-10: On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” 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. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of 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. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

What an intense, visceral moment, as we read this particular passage. We're all going to be tested. When you decide to marry somebody, you're ultimately going to be tested in that relationship. When you come before the Lord and you make a commitment, there's going to be tests. Paul will say in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Test yourself to see if you're of the faith." Test yourself. That's an interesting point, isn't it? It is bizarre that Galatians will remind us that we have a tendency to even deceive ourselves, so even the testing of ourselves is not always the best of tests. However, you will be tested in some way. Difficult times will come. Humbling will come into your life. We understand this as you read Deuteronomy 8. In verse 2, He says, "I tested you to see what was on your heart. So, I let you be without."

Have you ever been without? How you respond when you don't have anything is a very interesting journey. When Connie and I sold everything to go to school out in California, it was going pretty well. She was going to work

for Underground Evangelism there in Pasadena, and I was going to go to school. But then she decided to have a child without asking me. And I told her, "This is my first semester, and you decided to have a kid?" So, we had made that strange commitment that if we had children, she would stay home. So, now I have a full load at school, 17 hours, now working two to three jobs, not really happy with God at this particular point. I'm actually going into ministry, but not really happy with God. And as time goes by, within the second, third, beginning of the second year, we then have our second child. In each case, I had also made a commitment never to receive any money from the government. And before you went to the hospital, the hospitals that we went to were in Glendale. And so, I didn't want Connie to go into a bad hospital, so we went into a pretty good one, but you had to pay up front. So, working overtime, going to classes; I remember one semester in particular that all the money had been spent. And we were renting a home in Burbank, traveling through LA to go to school on the other side of LA. And I literally didn't have any gas money. I had not eaten for five days because we didn't have any food. And the babies

had run out of formula. So, it was now late at night, probably about 10 o'clock, and she says, "We've got to get them formula. We've got to give them something to eat." And so, I remember I had one thing left. It was a trumpet that I bought. And I thought, "Well, I can take it down to the pawn shop." The nice thing about Hollywood is you can go in the middle of the night and somebody's going to be open in the middle of Hollywood. I think this was around Sunset and Hollywood, and Vine kind of runs between them. So, I go down there, find a pawn shop, and I remember a few years ago I had paid over \$500 and really hardly used it, so I'm thinking I could probably get at least \$200 for it. The guy looked at me, he says, "I'll give you 40 bucks for it." And I remember thinking, "40 bucks. I can buy gas, go to school tomorrow, and feed the babies for a few more days." So, I sold it. But I can't say that I was thrilled about it. I wish I had been rejoicing more. You know, those times God was revealing what was in my heart, and I have to admit it wasn't full trust. I was willing to do whatever it took to get through, but I really wasn't trusting. Because if you're trusting, as James would

say, you'd be actually rejoicing over that, wouldn't you? And I can say I wasn't rejoicing.

Testing reveals what's on your heart. And it was through the process of those years that the Lord began to develop my heart. Those tests are necessary. When Scripture makes reference to testing, what it's talking about is that there's a "trying," there's a fire that goes on. And the way that Peter puts it is, he goes, "Don't be surprised at the fiery ordeal that you have to go through." In fact, Paul will ultimately say to Timothy, "Look, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. They're going to have trials. They're going to have tribulations." So, how do you pass the test? And the answer is that oftentimes we fail. And one of the things that I appreciate about reading these particular events in Abraham's life is that you not only see his successes, but you also see his failures. I mean, you see the time that he goes down to Egypt, and you see the times that he compromises with Lot, and you see the events and his concerns and his worries in which he tries to manipulate situations. I've been through them all. I mean, I try to manipulate stuff. I

try to make things work. You know, that walking by faith is a pretty unusual thing to do. It doesn't come natural for you to let go; for you to not perceive yourself as the answer. That just does not come naturally. And I would say more so if you're a guy, because you feel responsible for these things. For you to turn to your spouse and go, "We need to walk by faith," at a difficult time, I mean, it's not like I was just sitting around not working. But you realize that there are moments that all the stops are pulled out and God says, "So, are you going to believe?" God is faithful, isn't He? And I saw that through the years. And when I would get my heart right, then God began to open up doors. But boy, I did have some struggles.

We come to this passage at which Abraham finally makes the decision to just surrender all. And all he does surrender. It's a magnificent passage. I mean, if you read this passage and it doesn't speak to your heart, then you missed the point. What's interesting is that God visits him, and He's visited him before. God has visited him before. We know that he's by the oaks of Mamre, and God visits him and tells him that he's going to have a child at that

particular time, but He also warns them about the things of Sodom and Gomorrah. There were times where God came upon him and visited him when he made an offering or a sacrifice, and God spoke to him in these times. But this is a very unique time in which God comes to him and He goes, "Okay, here's the deal. I want you to take your only son, and I want you to put him on an altar, and I want you to burn him up." That's that burnt offering. That means that everything has to burn up. Just ashes left. How do you do that? We know that some years have gone by, and once again we talked about the fact that possibly as many as 25 years have now gone by, so Isaac's no young person. And at this particular state, there's been a relationship that's been built. And it's very clear, according to the passage, that the relationship that's been built is very tight, because Isaac will just simply do whatever his father wants him to do.

We pick up in which, in this passage, the proof of devotion is being made manifest, and in verse 4, it reads this way,

(Genesis 22:4) “On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.”

Now, God had told him, “I want you to go to the place that I chose.” In fact, the place will be a big issue in this particular passage.

If you look in Genesis 22:2,

“He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.””

So, the place seems to be very important to God. Now, Moriah, once again, making reference to the place that God chooses. It's very interesting, even a breakdown of that particular word, because it actually comes from the word “to see”. So, it is an interesting picture of God choosing a place that He wants you to look at. And of course, we know that ultimately it'll be the place where Christ is crucified. So, He's building up all of these things, and He says, “You want to make sure you go to the place I tell you.” Now, from what we understand, it's probably about 60 miles to the northeast from where he is in

Beersheba. So, he's got to do a little bit of trek, and he's got to carry all the possessions with him. It seems as if it's basically a 3-day journey.

So, as you look in verse 4,

(Genesis 22:4) “On the third day Abraham raised his eyes...”

And he now sees. And it's perceived that somebody is walking somewhere in the neighborhood of 7 to 8 miles a day as they're carrying possessions and things of that nature. And so, that would be about 3 days.

“On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.”

“The third day” is one of the few places where “third,” or 3 days is mentioned. It'll become very prominent with, of course, the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus.

“The third day,” that it would be mentioned in the text is going to be very important as well because it is the picture of focusing on that time as well as the place that God has chosen. The fact that Abraham was thinking in terms of resurrection is almost impossible to pull

together. And yet, as you read in Hebrews, and it talks about this particular event in the Book of Hebrews, it makes reference specifically stating that Abraham, as he takes his son, was thinking resurrection. He was thinking literally in Hebrews 11 that God is able to raise his son from the dead. It doesn't state it within this particular passage, but Hebrews will state it. That he would even be thinking about that is bizarre because, of course, at this particular juncture, nobody has ever been raised from the dead. So, why would he even be thinking such a thing?

Job, his contemporary about this time, that is to say Job is living around the same time as Abraham. As you read the Book of Job actually asks a question in Job 14:14, "If a man dies, will he live again?" That's an interesting question, isn't it? None of that has really been worked out, nor has it been proclaimed at this particular juncture. And yet, Job will say in Job 19:25, "I know somehow my Redeemer lives. I know that this isn't it."

Ecclesiastes will put it in these particular terms; it'll literally state in Ecclesiastes 3:11, "God has placed eternity in our hearts." There's something inside of us

that says, "This can't be it." That's one of the fundamental differences between creation and evolution. Evolution basically fundamentally says, "You have no purpose. You're just a mutant." Creation says, "You were planned before the foundation of the earth. You not only are loved, but you have a plan for your life that God has ordained." What do you want to believe in?

In fact, I remember talking to my neighbor not too long ago about this; his wife's a professing atheist. I don't know why God puts us around people like that. But I was talking to him about faith, and he goes, "Well, we don't believe in that." I said, "I get it. But you have to at least admit that in your heart of hearts, you believe that this isn't it. There's something inside of you that says there's got to be something more. You've got to at least admit that." He goes, "I admit that." God has placed that in our hearts. And there was something in Abraham's heart, once again, the text doesn't make reference to it, but the very fact that it starts off, "And after 3 days," is the very subtle way of Scripture going, "3 days, remember that time."

Now, let me bring one more thing in and we'll not belabor this. But if you were to go back to Genesis, actually the only point of reference that Abraham has with the whole 3-day thing is creation. And if you go into the whole 3-day thing, first day, second day, third day of creation, if you were to look at the third day, guess what the third day is? It's the sprouting of life from the ground. Did you know that? And the words that are used in the Hebrew are both “*dāšā*” and “*yāšā*”. And both of those words make reference to “brought forth from the ground,” and the second one literally can be translated, “rising from the ground”. And so, it says that vegetation rose from the ground. And of course, that's the picture of springtime, which is when Resurrection Day is, in which we celebrate Resurrection Day, in which a dead seed brings forth life out of the dirt. So, you have this wonderful picture that is given. With that point of reference, was he thinking about that? I don't know, but I can tell you this, he was thinking of resurrection on the third day.

(Genesis 22:4) “On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.”

A place, of course, clearly that God had chosen.

(Genesis 22:5) "Abraham said to his young men..."

Once again, the same word that's used for "young men" is the same word that's used for "lad". So, we believe that at this juncture, they're probably about the same age as Isaac is.

"Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey..."

That kind of donkey that's used, strangely enough, is red in color.

"... and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

"We're going to return to you"? I know that some people read that, "We will go and worship," so that's the plural, "and return to you." Some people might think, "Well, that's the singular." No, that's plural too. So, there was something in his heart that said somehow God is going to keep His promise.

Of course, once again, let me have you turn to Hebrews just so you can mark it in your Bibles.

(Hebrews 11:17) “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

(Hebrews 11:18) it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.”

(Hebrews 11:19) He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.”

He actually believed that, “We're going to come back.”

Now, the things that are being listed within the passage are to be noted. It's just him and the lad. It's him and his son going. At this juncture, all others are to the wayside.

Let me say this. In times of testing, it's just going to be you and God. I have seen in people's lives that when they go through difficulty, sad to say, I've heard Christians begin to criticize other people, “Well, nobody's helping me.” Okay, so what? As a believer, this isn't a test about everybody else. This is a test of, “will you trust God?”” It's just you and Him. There's going to come something in your life where it's just you and Him. You can't grow

bitter; you can't look around wondering where everybody else is. That has nothing to do with this. It's just you and God. And when you look at Christ as He goes to the cross, it says all His disciples scattered. Not one stood with Him. It was just Jesus and the Father. That was it. That's what test is. If you're trusting in anybody else, if you're trusting in anything else, then it's not testing your faith. And remember, James says, "Consider it all joy when you encounter these various trials because it's the testing of your faith that produces endurance." Are you going to trust wholly in God? Are you going to trust in Him alone? So, when he says, "Young men, stay here," you can't help but feel that after 25 years and somebody being around the same age, that they'd have relationships. You think at the time, if Abraham pulled up the knife and got ready to stab his son, that maybe his friends might come in, and go, "What, are you crazy? You can't do this." You've got to remove all those things that you might trust in and just put your trust in God. So, he sent the young man away. He says, "You just stay here." And the load now is taken off of the donkey and placed on his son, which the wood

placed on his son is an interesting picture of Christ and the cross being laid on Him, isn't it?

“... and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship...”

Underline the word “worship”. “Worship” really is a word that makes reference to him coming before God on his own volition. That is to say, a decision that he makes. And the word itself emphasizes falling to the ground. But the point of it is that “When all is said and done, I'm going to declare how great God is.” Abraham was saying to his young men, “We're going to celebrate how great God is. That's what we're going to do.” Now, once again, you go through trials, and the first thing you think about is, “Poor me.” But the purpose of the trial is for you to see how “great God is.”

(Genesis 22:6) “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire...”

Which, of course, is a clear picture of testing, of trying, the value of something.

Jesus says something interesting in the Gospels. He says, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled." Have you ever had conversations with God this way, "If I'm going to go through trials, let's get it over with. I don't want this to hang around"? But John the Baptist will say, "I came baptized in water; Jesus is going to come baptized in fire. You're going to be tested." And there is a test. So, in his hand is the test and the knife. The knife actually defined as something that separates. In fact, the word itself makes reference to separating. And probably, the most intense picture here is the thought of separating from the father and the son. That death is not just death, it's a separation from those that you love. What a horrible picture that is when you think about it.

But if you look at this, it says that he took the wood and he took in his hand the fire. He laid these things on him. And all of these give an example of that sense of purpose and without hesitation. He is literally embracing what God is telling him to do without hesitation. And this is probably one of the most difficult things that you will

have to do when you're being tested, is to embrace the testing. The tendency is to either start working slowly, or “I forgot something”, or something like that without a sense of purpose or resolve. But God is saying, “No, I want you to embrace the test.” You come to testing, and it’s just anything but something you want to celebrate, something that you want to embrace, but God says, “Do that.”

So, he takes these things, and if you look at the end of verse 6,

(Genesis 22:6) “... So the two of them walked on together.”

That's not just talking about the physical journey. But what he's talking about within the passage is the way that they both perceived what was happening. In fact, it's going to be mentioned again in verse 8.

(Genesis 22:8) “Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.”

So, the phrase is making reference to that they were wholly joined together and in total agreement, trusting each other in this circumstance. Have you ever had somebody that you were with and just could trust them that much? Even though everything that you're looking at is saying, it's literally screaming, "This isn't right." But then the person turns, and says, "You trust me?" And they say, "Yeah, I trust you." It says a lot for the relationship within this, and once again, God is going to test us in some way.

When you look at the prophets of the Old Testament, they were all tested in some way. And they were tested for a distinct purpose, so that they might feel what God was feeling. For instance, you read the Book of Hosea, and it talks about, "You're going to marry this woman, she's going to be unfaithful to you. She's going to play the harlot. She's going to find herself being auctioned off again, and you're going to go and buy her back." I can just imagine God telling me something like that and going, "Really? You want me to date this person?" "No, I want you to marry her." Now, the reason why God was having Hosea do that is so that he might feel the message. What

was the message? The message was that Israel had played the harlot with God; they worshiped other things. How is Hosea going to declare the pain and the hurt that this has brought God without feeling the pain and the hurt that it brought him? And so, as you see this passage, what you have is this interesting picture of God revealing how He feels and what He's going to do.

So, the passage goes on in verse 7,

(Genesis 22:7) “Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?””

Good question.

(Genesis 22:8) “Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself...””

Now, the word that's used for “Moriah” is the same word that is used there. And once again, translated, “You'll see.” “We're going to the place where you'll see. Things will be made clear. God will take care of this. You'll see. God will do this.”

“Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.”

It was enough. That was all that needed to be said. Quite frankly, what we're talking about is walking by faith. And you're confident not in what is happening, because obviously this whole thing is really out of sorts, but you're confident in the person that's talking to you. And your faith is in the person, not in your ability to understand. And once again, this is what faith is about. Faith is the substance of things not seen. “I don't understand.” Okay, that has nothing to do with faith. Faith is you trusting the person that says, “You'll see. I'll take care of it.”

(Genesis 22:8) “Abraham said, “God will provide...””

(Genesis 22:9) “Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there...”

Built? Why would he build an altar? Well, first of all, “*bānâ*” is where we get the word “bane,” which is the word “son”. So, it's a place really of building. It's no different than, as the Psalm says, God provides the cornerstone. And that was His Son. Children were looked

at as building blocks. And so, you were building something; you were building a heritage. And so, the word “*bānâ*” is the building, and the question is, what are you going to build your heritage on? Well, I think a lot of families want to build their heritage on pleasure, and “I'm going to give my kids everything I didn't have.” You know what you need to build it on? Sacrifice. Go back to what we talked about at offering; the goal of our instruction is love. Is it possible for your children to understand what love is without sacrificing? If you want to establish a home, build it on sacrificing. Encourage your children to give. Encourage your children to give of themselves. We present our bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord. That is a building that cannot be moved. Of all things to build, he builds an altar. And by the way, that's where we get the word for “place of slaughter”.

“... and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood...”

“Stretched out” is the word that's used. Is that not a picture of the cross?

He stretched out the wood,

“... and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

(Genesis 22:10) “Abraham stretched out his hand,”
without hesitation,

“... and took the knife to slay his son.”

There is a powerful passage in Psalms 22, if you'll turn there with me. And in many respects, this particular Psalm gives a picture of, if I can put it this way, the emotions of Christ at the time of crucifixion. We know that this is a parallel passage because of the declaration of Christ, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me,” is actually taken from this particular Psalm. It reads in Psalms 22:1 that very phrase and opens up with that very phrase. It becomes a prophetic passage as we go on, but the first part of it is very interesting because the statement fundamentally is, “I know that You're a Savior. I know, God, that You're somebody that can be dependent on. You've helped other people.”

And so, the way the passage goes is, “I know that You're holy. I have cried unto You. You've seen my groaning. I know that You're good.”

(Psalm 22:4) “In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them.”

So, God has a track record, right?

(Psalm 22:5) “To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed.”

Why is he saying this? Look around. You're going to see people go through hardship and sometimes people pray, and you go, “Wow, I've never seen a prayer answered so fast.” And then in your life, “What happened? He's not answering.” Now, some of it maybe you just need to get some things right. But some of it is that God is testing you to see what's on your heart. Oh, you may, like Peter, have said, “I'll never desert You. It doesn't matter what happens. I'll never desert You.” Jesus goes, “We'll see. We'll see. We'll let you prove yourself”. Of course, he denies that he even knows Him in that setting. Job was tested. Job perceived himself as the most righteous, and he's declared the most righteous man on the face of the

earth; so righteous that he's going to go to heaven because of his righteousness. We'll see. And the testing had to be more severe because of the fact that he was so confident in his own self-righteousness. But it was in that testing that he realized, "I am not."

God's going to test you. And sometimes it's going to seem like everybody else is being rescued but you. He describes himself in very interesting terms here in verse 6. And I know I've talked about this before, but it is necessary to repeat this. The word that he's using is the word "*tôlā'*," which is the word for "worm" within this particular context. It's a very unique worm. This particular worm is actually sold for dye. It makes a dye, and of all colors it makes a red dye. This dye that it makes is actually what is used and you'll see it in the Old Testament in Exodus in particular as it's talking about the making of the temple or the clothing of the priests in the making of and coloring their robes that crimson color. Isaiah will actually use the word, "though your sins be red like crimson." The word "crimson" will be the same word "*tôlā'*," which is the same word for "worm," that is used in this passage. So,

this worm is known for secreting this red dye. That's actually a permanent dye that is used. And it was used for these things, in particular in the temple. The way that this red dye is made is the worm, when getting ready to bring forth its young, climbs onto a tree and fastens itself to the tree. Upon fastening itself to the tree, it then has its young, and by virtue of supporting its young, it embraces the tree to such an extent that it crushes its own body, causing it to secrete and feed the young. In other words, the intensity of the embrace is what brings forth the young. I love the way that it's put in Hebrews, that God would bring many sons to glory through the cross. And Scripture will tell us in Isaiah 53 that it pleased God to crush His Son.

So, it's not a mistake in the passage where the declaration of the prophetic Christ coming on the cross is declared,

(Psalm 22:6) “But I am a worm...”

“I am but a *tôlā'*.”

“... and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people.”

(Psalm 22:7) All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,

(Psalm 22:8) “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him...”

Isn't that exactly what they were crying when He was on the cross? “Let Him rescue You. I mean, You said Your Father delights in You, let Him rescue You.”

(Psalm 22:9) “Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb...”

Why would he use that phrase at this particular juncture? I mean, “I'm a worm. I'm despised and rejected. Yet for this reason, I was born.” That fundamentally is what he's stating within the text. “I was born to crush. That's the whole reason I was born.”

“... You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts.”

“You taught me to rely on men, now all men are crucifying me.”

(Psalm 22:10) “Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb.

(Psalm 22:11) Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help.”

All alone, you and God.

(Psalm 22:12) “Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.”

It's a picture of wealth, power, and pride.

(Psalm 22:13) “They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravener and a roaring lion.”

It's kind of the description of Satan in 1 Peter, isn't it? A roaring lion seeking who he may devour.

Watch verse 14.

(Psalm 22:14) “I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax...”

He can feel the life draining out of him.

“... It is melted within me.”

(Psalm 22:15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd...”

The reason he uses “potsherd” is because it’s kind of a description of something that has no value.

“... And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death.

(Psalm 22:16) For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me;

They pierced my hands and my feet.

(Psalm 22:17) I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me;

(Psalm 22:18) They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.”

Is that not the Christ? It is a picture of helplessness. It's a picture of loneliness. It's a picture of the greatest of suffering and being discarded as being worthless.

So, have you ever gone through difficult times? I mean, what does it mean to take up your cross and follow Christ? What exactly does that mean? Scripture says that while being reviled, He didn't in return, but He gave a blessing instead. How do you do that? It's all about trust. And this picture is not only the devotion of Abraham to God, but God's devotion to Abraham. Has He not said, “I

will never leave you nor forsake you”? It sure feels like He's going to.

Hosea puts it this way in Hosea 6:1-2,

“Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

(Hosea 6:2) He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him.”

And Thessalonians will say, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” We don't have to be afraid of death anymore. We don't have to be afraid of anything. You're going to have times of testing. Let's just say that there are fundamental things that you have to do during those times. The first thing I would say is, don't ever take your eyes off the place that He has chosen. What place is that? That's the cross. Don't ever take your eyes off of Moriah. That's the place we want you to remember, because it's going to be at this place that He's going to die instead of you. And this is the place where He's going to take on your sins. This is the place where He's going to be abandoned. You think that you've suffered, He's going to

suffer all of your pains at this moment. Don't ever take your eyes off that because, you know, I find when I actually put my eyes on my suffering and my pain, then I begin to feel sorry for myself. But when I take my eyes and I put it on that place that He has chosen, I never in any way veer off of that wonderful place of faith and trust because I know what He has done for me. Scripture tells us to fix our eyes upon Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith. And Jesus will say in John 12, "If I be lifted up, I'll draw all men to Myself." And that's a wonderful picture that we have within that particular passage.

I would say this too, that we walk by faith at this time, not by sight. And there are going to be times that you're going to go through difficulty and you're not going to see the answer. The tendency is to believe only by things that you can understand. But once again, we're not putting our trust in what we understand. We put our trust in the One who's giving out the command. In that particular case, Isaac was putting his trust in his father. His father said, "The Lord's going to take care of this. You'll see. The Lord's going to take care of this." We put our trust in the

word of God rather than the things that we see or the things that we could ever understand. That's what's walking by faith.

And let me just add one more thing to this. If, in fact, you're walking by faith and not by sight, you will actually embrace the difficulty. You'll take the wood and hug it. because you'll see this as an opportunity to build something of great value. This is an opportunity to sacrifice. I've oftentimes said in those difficult times where we were both struggling, I realized just how much my wife loved me. And I remember a day where literally, once again, we had nothing. And I just told her, "I feel so terrible," because I just felt I couldn't work anymore. I was sleeping 2 hours a day as it was. So, I said, "I don't know what to do. I just am inept. I don't know what to do." And she says, "Honey, we're going to pull through this together. Doesn't matter that we don't have anything. I'm with you. I'll always be with you." And I said to myself, "Money couldn't buy that." But you couldn't know that unless you went through it. There's a value in testing, and you ought to embrace it. Because it's in that

time that you're going to see what's really valuable. It's at that time that you're actually going to see relationships deepen, and you're going to embrace the challenge. You're going to hug the tree. We're tree huggers. But certainly, in a different way.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us. And what a wonderful message that instead of us sacrificing, You would; that You would become a worm for us, that You would bring many sons to glory. How wonderful the third day is. If there is no resurrection, we're the most to be pitied. But there is. And Christ did rise from the dead. You've been pointing to this place from the very beginning. You want us to live in this realm. With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you, in your heart's mind, eye, to lift your eyes up and look at that place. It's a place in which God demonstrates His love for you. How could you not trust Him? When trials and tribulations come in your life, how could you not trust Him? Believe the person, not your understanding. You've seen that He's trustworthy.

Embrace this moment as a moment in which you'll be more like Him than ever before. Rejoice.