



WEEKLY SERMON

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Message: Portrait of Grace - #9

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Text: Genesis 22:1-14

Our Lord is eternal, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He moves with us through all the seasons of life, and according to Psalm 31:15, our time is in His hands.

The Lord is with us in our time of trouble. Psalm 9:9 says that God is "**a refuge in time of trouble.**" Psalm 27:5 adds "**For in the time of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion.**" And the writer of Psalm 37:39 calls God our "**strength in the time of trouble.**" If you're facing any kind of trouble right now, those verses were written for you.

The Lord is with us in our time of temptation. When Jesus explained His parable of the sower in Luke 8, He described some who spring up without any roots, "**...which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.**" (Luke 8:13). But for those who are truly rooted and grounded in God's salvation, He has promised to be with us in times of temptation, to guard us and keep us, to forgive us and provide a way of escape. When we're battling the terrible tug of a tempting habit, it's helpful to remember we're aided by the same God who delivered His people from the Red Sea, His prophet from the lion's den, His apostles from the Judean jail, and His Son from the sealed tomb.

The Lord is with us in our time of old age. Psalm 71:9 says: "**Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.**" I confess that I'm increasingly thankful for those promises in the Bible that specifically address the issue of aging. They are promises of God to sustain us through the sunset years, to give us additional strength to be useful and bear fruit. Even as our outer man wears down, our inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The Lord is with us in our time of need. One of the most precious promises of God is the invitation extended by Him in Hebrews 4:16 for us to "**...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**"

The Lord is with us in our time of refreshing. The phrase "times of refreshing" is a great definition of "revival." In Acts 3:19, Peter said, "**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;**" Be refreshed today! Let the very presence of Jesus Christ invigorate you.

The Lord will be with us at the time of our death. The Apostle Paul was eager to get on to heaven, and he talked about it in II Timothy 4:6-8, but he didn't use the word "**death.**" He used the term "**departure,**" saying, "**For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**"

The Lord will be with us at the time of the end. After a series of visions and prophecies describing the signs of the times and the end of the age, the Lord said to Daniel: "**Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.**" (Daniel 12:9). We should study the Book of Daniel and all the prophecies in Scripture relating to our Lord's return; and then we'll go our way, confident that history

is under His control, that His decrees have been sealed up until their appointed time, and that He will be with us every moment during the events of the Second Coming.

I have been told that the word "**time**" occurs 771 times in the Bible. The words "**eternal**," "**eternity**," "**everlasting**" and "**forever**" occur 548 times. God is aware of the limitations we face with time, but He wants us to know that He transcends the clock and the calendar. He travels with us through all the trials of time and through all the days of our lives. From everlasting to everlasting, He is God, forever and ever.

In **HIS** Amazing Grace, - *Pastor David Miklas*

"Abraham - The Grace to Release"

INTRODUCTION: Here is a statement on which to focus your attention in this message,

"Anything we hold dear, we must learn to hold loosely." If we hold anything too tightly, it probably has US rather than our having IT. And God will not allow that for your sakes or that of your loved one.

As I ponder this principle, four distinct areas of everyday life come to mind.

FIRST: Our Possessions - By possessions, I mean anything that has a price tag, material things we purchase, or things that have been passed on to us from others. This doesn't necessarily involve greed. Some of the most treasured items in our home that we have received from parents have very little monetary value.

Let's not kid ourselves about our desire to clutch "things." And let's not overlook how essential it is that we release them deliberately and consistently.

SECOND: Our Positions - Far too many of us identify ourselves by titles and positions. I don't mean the prestige of a title. I mean the sense of identity we have through our occupation, our work.

Each and every week, someone somewhere loses his or her job or business. And the financial problems account for only part of the stress. In fact, we can become so enmeshed in our work that the loss of a vocation becomes a loss of identity.

On the other hand, if we have a strong sense of who we are, founded upon our relationship with God, then the loss of a job is mainly a change in our schedule and driving patterns.

THIRD: Our Dreams - The death of a dream is difficult loss to accept. Seeing the implosion of a long-awaited desire, or something you planned on and worked for during many years, can leave you reeling, feeling empty, drained of hope and direction.

If you are a goal-oriented, driven person, this can feel like a loss of life's purpose. Unfortunately, most dreams are either lost or must be set aside before they are fulfilled.

FOURTH: Our Relationships - The most difficult of all things to hold loosely would be relationships. This includes mates, parents, children, extended family members, and friends.

**Romances that are now flourishing may wither.
Partnerships that now seem solid may fracture.
Friends die. Roommates move out. Neighbors move on.
Workers, both men and women, follow callings and offers to work elsewhere.**

Therefore, we must hold all of our earthly relationships loosely. Yes, *all*.

Probably no one learned this lesson better than Abraham. From one of my favorite chapters in the Old Testament, Genesis 22:1-19 describes an episode that many have overlooked- at least in the way we are going to view it.

This story is the loss of a person, the death of a father-son relationship that was closer than words can possibly portray. Being a mom or a dad, you will have no trouble having empathy for Abraham. Here is the familiar story.

VERSE 1: "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." Notice the opening words, "After these things..."

God had promised Abraham a son, through whom the whole world would be blessed. This was not just any son, but a particular son of promise. This son was born to Abraham and Sarah when they were well beyond their age to conceive, and in this story this son is now a young man.

The word “tempt” found in verse 1 implies a “test.” In the Old Testament, this word is often translated by the word “prove.” God wanted to prove or test Abraham's obedience.

VERSE 2: “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” It seemed as though in this verse every word was calculated to hurt Abraham as deeply as possible.

“Abraham, I want you to take YOUR son THINE ONLY son Isaac, YOUR son WHOM thou LOVE.” Each word was like a knife sinking deeper and deeper, **“and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering...”**

The phrase “burnt offering” meant Abraham was to literally, totally cremate his son.

God tells Abraham I want your son back, your only son. The test was very real; he was to give Isaac back to God. As a test, it was designed to prove faith.

For it to be a real test it had to defy logic; it had to be something Abraham wanted to resist. God clearly tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. But would Abraham willingly kill Isaac?

This was a test of how much Abraham would obey God's word. Would he cling to the boy now that he had him, or would he still obey and return him to God?

I believe the key to this extended passage is the statement: **“Perfect faith in the heart is exhibited by perfect obedience in the life.”**

Faithful obedience always results in faithful action. We can never **TEST** the great resources of God until our **faith sees the impossible and yet believes the possible.**

Faith is resting in the promises of God. Hadn't God promised Isaac? Hadn't God promised to make Abraham's seed as the sands of the sea, and the numberless stars of the sky?

Faith does not question God; faith believes and obeys.

VERSES 3-4: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.” I am sure on his **three** day journey, there must have been great **confusion** in Abraham's mind, and great **anguish** of soul, as well as great **horror** at the prospect. Can you picture it?

There was Abraham on his goatskin pallet the first night reaching out and letting a handful of sand run through his fingers as he imagined **“seed as the dust of the earth!”** Then he thought, **“What about this promise if Isaac is dead?”**

Another night, perhaps the uncounted stars looked down on Abraham's sleepless eyes and he may have thought, **“How will the heavenly seed be as “the stars innumerable” if Isaac DIES?”** But faith leaped up, and Abraham believed and obeyed.

VERSE 5: “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you...” This is an incredible verse, for in the tense of the Hebrew language we read, **“I and the lad WE WILL go yonder and WE WILL worship, and WE WILL come again to you.”**

Did you catch that last phrase, **“and WE WILL come again to you.”** This speaks volumes

concerning Abraham's faith.

Abraham had not staggered at the promise of God.

Abraham had learned to trust so fully that he believed He could even raise Isaac from the dead.

In the New Testament, **Hebrew 11:17-19** interprets for us the action of Abraham,

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, (18) Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: (19) Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

Abraham in his own mind had offered up Isaac as a sacrifice, the act was done. He believed God **COULD** and **WOULD** do something he had never **SEEN** before and never **HEARD** before, that is - raise his son from the dead.

What did Abraham know about the resurrection? **NOTHING!**

Had he ever seen someone rise from the dead? **NEVER!**

Yet, he had confidence in God that He believed. Why?

Because we have a God that can be counted on, we have a God that can be trusted. We have a God who is faithful.

VERSES 6-7: “And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. (7) And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” All this time Isaac asks no questions, he just obeys.

However, here comes the first question, **"Say Dad, we have the wood, we have the fire, but if we are going to offer a sacrifice, WHERE IS THE LAMB?"**

What a profound question, **"where is THE LAMB?"**

All through the Old Testament the question was asked **"where is THE LAMB?"**

It is not until you come to the New Testament that the answer is given when John saw Jesus and said in **John 1:29** **"Behold THE Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."**

VERSE 8: “And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.” Now there are two ways of reading this verse.

Number 1. First to Abraham in the context we could read, **"God will provide himself A LAMB".**

NUMBER 2. Second, we could see this in a prophetic sense, **"God will provide HIMSELF a lamb".**

Remember the Lord Jesus is **"THE lamb slain from the foundation of the world."** Calvary was ever in view. Every sacrifice offered was a reminder that sin had not yet been paid for. Ultimately, it will take the sacrifice at Calvary.

VERSES 9-10: “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. (10) And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”

Abraham had built altars **at Sichem, at Bethel, at Hebron, and at Beersheba.** But none of these would do except the one on Mount Moriah. It had to be here, since Mount Moriah would become the location of Calvary.

Remember there is only one place for salvation. It is at the place called CALVARY, where redemption was forever paid for.

The point being made in this indescribable story is:

God **CAN**, God **SHOULD**, and God **MUST BE TRUSTED** regardless of the circumstances in which you find yourself.

God **CAN**, God **SHOULD** and God **MUST BE TRUSTED** regardless of whether or not you feel this testing is coming from God Himself, or whether it is coming from your family situation, or your place of work where the circumstances seem dim.

In **verse 10** we read, “**And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.**” Abraham said, “**I have trusted you this far.** In his mind the act was consummated, it was already done.

Notice again **verse 14**, “**And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.**”

Your GOD, and my GOD is JEHOVAH-JIREH; You and I can TRUST HIM in the midst of our CIRCUMSTANCES.

Now what does the name Jehovah-Jireh actually mean? The Hebrew word “**Jireh**” is “**raah**,” and many times in the Old Testament it is translated “**to be seen**” as in **verse 14**, “**It shall be seen**”.

However, if you go to **verse 8** the same Hebrew word “**raah**” is translated differently. God will “**Jireh**,” or in your Bible it reads “**God will PROVIDE.**”

So the word “**Jireh**” means “**to be seen and to provide.**” It has a two-fold meaning, “**to preview, which means to see something ahead of time, and to provide for the eventual need.**”

Abraham is saying this God of mine is the God who **FORESEES** the need and then he **PROVIDES** for that need. May I say to you, our God sees our circumstances?

He knows about that problem.

He knows about that headache.

He knows about that temptation.

He knows about that trial you are going through.

He knows what is going to happen tomorrow.

He knows what is going to happen in the balance of this week.

He knows what is going to happen in the balance of your life.

This is absolutely awesome to know God has already provided for us even before we know we have a need or will be facing a problem in life. Therefore, when you pray, don't just call Him “**My Heavenly Father**,” call Him “**MY JEHOVAH-JIREH.**” May you be mindful of the fact that He is a God that **FORESEES**, and as a result He **PROVIDES!**

There is another lesson we need to see from **Genesis 22:12, 15-18** and it found in the New Testament in **Romans 12:1** we read, “**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**” What is the Isaac in your life that needs to be placed on the altar?

**Is it your mate? Is it your job?
Is it your home? Is it your finances?
Is it your future? Is it your children?**

**O we never can prove the delight of His love,
Until ALL on the altar we lay.
For the favor He shows and the joy He bestows,
Are for those who will TRUST and OBEY!**

I believe God's blessing will only really come when we have laid our **ALL** on the **ALTER**

of SURRENDER!

Now back to our point on the "GRACE TO RELEASE." Some parents may find themselves in a similar situation. Your relationship with your child may have reached a point where you have no other choice but to commit him or her completely to God's care.

You would love to work out the details, but you cannot.

You know the Lord is good, and you have prayed for a resolution, but nothing has changed.

Only God can intervene. And because that is true, you can take your cues from Abraham.

Place your relationship with that son or daughter on the altar today. Surrender him or her to the Lord as an offering. Take this risk. Mentally place your boy or girl on top of the wood and step back from the altar. Trust God. In His time, He will provide.

In this fascinating story of faith and sacrifice and trust and surrender, you should notice the characteristics of a God who asked nothing of Abraham that He didn't demand of Himself. Because it is so significant, I share with you three powerful truths about our God that I see illustrated here.

First, God the Father showed us how to live when He released His dear Son to us.

Nine months before that wondrous night in Bethlehem, the Father sent His Son.

Christ willingly left His seat of absolute power in heaven, set aside the voluntary use of His divine authority, and became a helpless infant.

As a human, subject to all the pains and sorrows and limitations that affect us all, He would mature, learn, minister, suffer . . . and die.

If the Father was willing to release His own Son to us, what could be so much more precious to us that we would withhold it from Him?

Second, God the Son showed us how to die when He released Himself to the Father.

Isaac's quiet obedience to his father illustrates this beautifully. He gave himself over to the will of his father and allowed himself to be placed on an altar without a fight. That's exactly what the Son of God did at Calvary. When our faith is mature, we'll not fear death.

Third, God the Spirit will show us how to live and die as we learn how to release whatever has us in its grip.

As long as we're owned by whatever we're clutching, we'll never be given over completely to the Holy Spirit. This would be an excellent moment for you to do some self-analysis. To what, to whom are you clinging? Let it go. Let them go.

Now let me press all of this even further. What is it that you are gripping so tightly?

What is it a - possession?

What is it a - your vocation?

What is it a - a dream?

What is it a - a consuming relationship?

The Lord may be in the process of taking it from you. He'll gently tug on it at first, giving you the opportunity to release your grip. If you resist, He'll eventually have to pry your fingers away, and I can assure you that it will hurt.

My humble advice, voluntarily release it. Trust the Lord to provide. He has another ram in the thicket. You can't see it right now, but He has it waiting. Only after you have placed your sacrifice on the altar will you be ready to receive God's provision.

Abraham taught his son well that day so many thousands of years ago. His anguished act of complete faith demonstrated to all—especially to Isaac—that God was his God.

I wonder how the relationship changed after that.

I feel sure that Abraham enjoyed his son far more coming down the mountain than he did going up. Not just because he came so close to losing him, but because his releasing Isaac gave Abraham the freedom to love him even more.

Perhaps the best way to end this message is with a prayer. by A. W. Tozer. As we read his words slowly and thoughtfully. Pause as each sentence ends and think about what you've just read:

**Father, I want to know Thee, but my coward
heart fears to give up its toys.
I cannot part with them without inward bleeding,
and I do not try to hide from Thee the terror
of the parting. I come trembling, but I do come.**

**Please root from my heart all those things which
I have cherished so long and which have become a very
part of my living self, so that Thou mayest enter
and dwell there without a rival.**

**Then shalt Thou make the place of Thy feet glorious.
Then shall my heart have no need of the sun to
shine in it, for Thyself wilt be the light of it,
and there shall be no night there.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.**

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon "**Abraham – Grace to Release,**" right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, "**...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...**"

Romans 10:13, "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: "**I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.**"

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please let me know. Please send an e-mail to pastormiklas@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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