

## GOD'S PROVISION IS AT THE TOP

Genesis 22:1-14

**TEXT:** *Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place **The LORD Will Provide**. And to this day it is said, "**On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.**"*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

When my sisters and I were little kids, my mother would often call on one of our neighbors to babysit us. She had been a Lutheran who left the Lutheran church, believing that church-going wasn't necessary for living a Christian life. One thing she liked to do when babysitting us was to teach us religious songs. **Climb, climb up sunshine mountain Heavenly breezes blow; Climb, climb up sunshine mountain, faces all aglow. Turn, turn from sin and doubting, look to God on high. Climb, climb up sunshine mountain, You and I.** As Abraham climbed Mt. Moriah, do you think such a song went through his mind?

Hardly! Scripture tells us what was going through Abraham's mind as he climbed Mt Moriah to sacrifice Isaac. It was the Resurrection of the Lord. And what did Abraham discover in this heart-breaking climb? He learned that it is true: **THE LORD'S PROVISION IS AT THE TOP.**

Before us is another awesome piece of Scripture. It cannot be understood or accepted unless a person knows and believes in two words: Christ's Resurrection. Otherwise it makes no sense. How could anyone resolve the contradiction God set before Abraham without believing in the Resurrection of God's Christ? First of all, God had declared that it would be through Abraham and his son, Isaac, that the future Christ would come into this world. Then the Lord commands Abraham to commit the sin of child sacrifice. The Bible tells us clearly what went through Abraham's mind. In the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, we are told: ***By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*** He 11 Here Abraham uses his God-given reason as the way it is to be used: in submission to faith in the promise of the Savior.

The inspired author to the Hebrews tells us that this is how Abraham figured it out. That promise of God that said ***...It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned...*** referred the Savior, Jesus, the Christ, who was that Offspring, or Descendant, that God said would come into the world, down from Eve, through Abraham and then through Isaac. That's why, based upon the solid Rock of this promise of the Christ, Abraham used his God-given reason to conclude that God could raise the dead Isaac, the bearer of the Savior, and, ***figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death...*** You see, Abraham, by faith in the future Christ, was actually going to go through with cutting his son's throat and burning his body. That's why the Lord stopped Abraham at the last second. The demonstration of God's faithfulness to the promise of the Resurrection had gone on far enough.

There are people today who believe and teach that Christians are assured happiness, convenience and success in this world. The lying preachers and teachers who declare that God wants us to be happy, healthy and wealthy must avoid preaching on this text because there was no rational explanation to God's command that Abraham sacrifice his son. They would have us believe that if we only turn from sin and look to God our life will be a climb up "Sunshine Mountain" along with "heavenly breezes." But what do today's happy, feel-good, churches do with Jesus' own command to us: ***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*** Lu 9 Are these happy words? Is this a commandment that makes us feel good about ourselves as we leave for home?

Yet they are the very words of our Savior God who carried his cross, died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Like Abraham, faith in Jesus' resurrection is what makes us climb the mountains our Lord graciously asks us to climb, and to carry the crosses He wisely places on our shoulders.

God knew how far He could push the faith of Abraham. That's why the Lord stopped him at the last second. And the Lord knew how difficult this test was for Abraham. Listen to God's simple command: ***Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."*** Abraham and Sarah had waited 25 years for the birth of this boy. They waited from the time they were 75 and 65 respectively until the child was born 25 years later. Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. Then nearly 3 decades later, God tells Abraham: "I know that you really love this boy of yours -- your only son -- but I want you to sacrifice him as a burnt offering."

Abraham's climb up Mt. Moriah was no climb up "Sunshine Mountain," was it? Put yourself in his shoes. I'm certain that he could not have laid this horrible burden on his dear wife Sarah. That night of wrestling with God's promise and command met the dawn with the resolve of faith, and the Bible says: ***Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac.*** He probably told Isaac to kiss his mother, and then off they went. Off they went, climbing step by step that mountain whose summit meant certain death and, as Abraham firmly believe, a resurrection. God would have to resurrect Isaac, or there would be no Jesus Christ. Yet the thought of impaling his son's jugular and feeling his warm blood spurting up to his elbows had to haunt him each and every step of the way. What kind of God is this who makes us go through such battles of faith? Only faith in a God whose love is so deep that he himself would send his only begotten Son to shoulder the weight of the sin of all humanity and then punish him in our stead.

Figuratively speaking, each of us have witnessed a fellow Christian standing at the base of his or her own Mt. Moriah, staring at the top. I've watched Christian mothers collapse at the news that their child has a life-threatening disease. I've listened helplessly as a worried husband and father loses his job and has no clue of how he's going to provide. I've stood in the room with sobbing parents holding their newborn, born dead. I've witnessed these things, and so have you.

And each of us has been there. Each of us have looked at the top of a horrible climb with nothing but the same promise that made Abraham keep going: Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose again for my justification. With nothing but our Baptism Certificate and the Scriptures that say: ***don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*** Ro 6 This may not make us happy, but it is the power of God Himself who enables us to pick up our cross and follow Him.

The Bible says that this was a test. And tests are tailored by God to make our faith stronger. It was at the top that this God who made that single promise upon which all hope is based put an end to the testing: ***When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.*** God knew this already, and that's why He intervened when He did. It was for Abraham and Isaac's sake that this test was

given, for then Abraham preached a sermon to Isaac and to all of us: *So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."* But keep in mind that it is only *On the mountain of the LORD...* at its summit, when all has been fully accomplished that God will provide.

Until then, we keep climbing, trusting Jesus, confessing the truth, going back down for a rest, and then climbing back up the next Mt. Moriah God would have us scale. As one pastor once said, "The life of the Christian is a wild roller-coaster ride that ends with real life and the thrill of being a child of God." Amen.