

Blessing in Disguised

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Genesis 22:1-14

We all want to have a blessed life where nothing goes wrong, but when we least expect it something challenging sometimes comes into our lives. We don't understand the reason why we are going through the hardship but there is a purpose behind it. We will find out the reason from today's message.

1. God Will Test Those He Loves (Genesis v1-v5)

Genesis 22:1-5

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded 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. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ 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."

Isaac was a miracle child given by God to Abraham and Sarah. After God promised Abraham that he would have a child, they waited for 24 long years without any sign of the promised child. When they thought they would not be able to have a child of their own, God gave them Isaac. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old they had Isaac. This child didn't come easily. It was a miracle child, their only child, their only hope of having descendants. But we see here in verse 1, God tested Abraham, "some time later", when Abraham thought all was well. God wanted Abraham to sacrifice his only son to the Lord.

When everything seems ok, when everything seems to be going according to plan sometimes unexpected trials can suddenly appear. Maybe your investment suddenly fails drastically or you might suddenly find that you have a serious illness, or perhaps it is the sudden realisation that your partner is having an affair, or perhaps your visa might be rejected or that your friend or colleague has betrayed you.

Suddenly everything is gone, suddenly your security is gone, suddenly your relationship is gone, suddenly your retirement plan is gone, suddenly your life is gone.

In V2 we see that God gave a clear instruction to Abraham, God is in it. He is the one who plans the test. In the same way, God plans your test.

Some people will say it is to test Abraham's faith and obedience towards God. Yes, this is true, God does test us to see if we are still willing to obey him or not after we receive his blessings. But I also believe that God wanted Abraham to know that it is God who gave Abraham his son, Isaac, Isaac is not to become Abraham and Sarah's idol. God doesn't want Abraham to love the blessing more than the one who gave the blessing.

Brothers and sisters, it is important that we remember that our God is not a cruel God. After all, He was willing to give us His only son, how can He be a cruel God? How can He not understand our hardship since He came to this world and went through the hardship in this world Himself? There is a purpose when God test us.

You might be going through a tough time, you might be experiencing serious illness, or have financial difficulties, or family problems. You might be jobless or waiting for a work visa for what is beginning to feel like an eternity.

For those who believe in God, these tests do not come accidentally but with purpose. Recall how God planned the test for Abraham. The test is for you but since the loving God is in it, the test is for your good.

At this time, I just want to share something about the Jewish tradition on this passage which may help us to understand this verse in a better way. A Chumash is a Jewish commentary on the passages of the first five books of the Old Testament. It is not what's in the scriptures, but it is a Jewish tradition of what they believe happened even beyond what you see there.

Genesis 22:2 was not just a command, but when you read it, it seems that it was a conversation. Genesis 22:2 wasn't just God going to take Isaac, but what tradition believes, and the belief was that there was a conversation, a back and forth conversation that was taking place. And here is what they said. They said when you see the commas, tradition believes that it was the insertion of Abraham speaking to what God was asking him to do. So, you would see a comma the Jewish commentary states that that's when Abraham was, in a sense, having his fingers on it and was giving his pushback, "This is what you're asking for? Something that I've been holding on to?" And God goes "I will have the conversation with you." But just understand if you are going to go into a debate with God, God always wins. So let me just show you the verse again and you will see what I am talking about.

In verse 2 of chapter 22, God said, "Take now your son," comma, and this is where the Jewish commentary said that Abraham would respond here. God then said "Your only son" comma, Abraham would respond there. "Whom you love" comma, "Isaac and go to the land of Marion". When you look at that, it makes sense to me because it seemed there was too much description of Isaac in that.

I want to read to you what God said, and then at the comma, what possibly what Abraham may have responded in his pushback of what was happening. So, we look at the first part and this is what God says. "Take now your son", comma, Abraham could have said. "I have two sons". In his mind, he was hoping, "I hope it's the other one" and all of a sudden came the next phrase. Then God responds "your only son", comma, I think Abraham could have said, "they are both my sons." And God goes "OK, looks like we're going to play a game here," and so God adds these words "the one whom you love." I could just see Abraham thinking "Come on, God. I love them both," and then it simply says this, "Isaac". "Isaac", that's who I'm talking about. Let me just remind you, don't ever argue with God because he will allow you to pushback for a while and then He will name it for you clearly. You can come up with all the excuses and God will put His finger on it. You can be the greatest lawyer and it may work in the courts, but not in the courts of heaven because God will let you argue for a few moments and then all of a sudden, He will name it and you will not be able to reply.

So don't argue with God, He will always win, and whatever He takes away from you, it is for the good.

It is to help us to trust in His guidance and provision. It is to bring our hearts towards Him, not only to love the blessings that God gave us but that we might learn to love the Giver Himself.

Like V5, the journey could be lonely as Abraham left his servants and went to Mt. Moriah by himself and Isaac. So it is with our journey of trials, the journey could be lonely, people don't know how you are struggling or broken you might be, how you are feeling and that you are actually in pain. But we can fix our eyes on the Lord, we can come to the Lord, to the place of worship and say Lord I surrender my situation to you. My broken life is a worship to you, my painful life is a worship to you.

2. Obedience Requires Action v6-v10

⁶ 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, ⁷ 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?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

V6a “Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac.”

Abraham prepared the wood that was to be used for the burnt offering. He himself carried the fire and the knife. For the first part of verse 6, most of us would know that this verse is a foreshadowing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He himself carried the cross as the great sacrifice, once and for all to clean our sins.

V 6b “and he himself carried the fire and the knife.”

The knife is to kill and the fire to burn. Abraham carried the things that would end his son’s life. Abraham didn’t expect others to carry his responsibilities, he carried the responsibility of this disaster himself. God had given him this mission.

How many of us would blame others or try to pass the responsibility for our problems on to others? We should, especially for those of us who are guys, be man enough and take up the responsibility and face it. Don’t blame your wife or pass the responsibility of fixing the problem on to your wife. You need to lead your family through your difficult times by bringing your family to God and letting them experience the work of God together.

The conversation in verse 7 must have been so painful. Yet, he spoke out the truth by faith “God himself will provide the lamb for the burn offering, my son.” His faith in God brought his proclamation into reality.

Hebrews 11:17-19

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

The Bible here says, Abraham believed in God. By faith he proclaimed it and it happened. When Abraham trusted God, God took over, God was in control of the situation and provided for Abraham. Abraham grasped the promise of God that through Isaac his descendant would come and that God would not go against His promise.

Sometimes we don’t understand why hardship comes to us but at such times we need to just obey God and follow what He tells us, trusting that He will provide, trusting that He will change the situation for the better, trusting that the trial has a good purpose to your life. When we do this we will start to see God work. Obedience requires action, no matter how hard it is but that is when we experience miracles.

3. God Will Provide

¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

¹² “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.”

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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 verse 11 to verse 12 we see that when it was time to stop the test, it would stop. Your test might be longer than you want it to be or feel larger than you are able to handle. However, at the right time, when it has achieved its purpose, it will stop. It will not be longer than necessary. So, if it hasn't stopped it could mean it has not achieved its purpose yet.

In verse 13 we see that the purpose of the test is not to destroy you and that at the right time, God will provide a way out. God will provide for your needs, your healing will come, your relationship will be restored, and your problems will be solved.

I believe God will not leave you empty. He will replace everything you lost. If He asks you to put something down, it is because He wants you to pick up something greater.

Yes, God's provisions might be different to what you hoped them to be, but the purpose that it has achieved in your life will have eternal value.

It is possible that your loved one might not be brought back to life, your spouse might not come back to you, and your sickness might still be there, but your faith is no longer built on good results but on your relationship with God and that this faith will not be shaken by the tests and trials in life.

Faith doesn't always take you out of the problem, faith takes you through the problem. Faith doesn't always take away the pain, faith gives you the ability to handle the pain. Faith doesn't always take you out of the storm, faith calms you in the midst of the storm.

We can trust God in whatever He is doing because He loves us so much that he provided His Son to die for us on our behalf. 2000 years later, after the ram took the place of Isaac, Jesus at the same place, Mt. Moriah took our place and died for us. He might provide for our current needs, He might not provide the way we hoped for but one thing is for sure, He has provided us the way to have eternal life. He has provided the way back to the heavenly Father, the way home, which is far more important than what we receive in this world.