

Full Surrender to God

Genesis 22

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We need to thank God for his presence with us this evening which most of us probably sensed in our prayer time. It's a great privilege to be in his presence like that.

You're sitting in the living room at home on a winter evening and there's a bang and a hiss and you know a pipe has frozen and burst. So you rush into the bathroom and the water is spraying all around your wallpaper. You get insulating tape and start wrapping it and you know how that goes; it's like a Laurel and Hardy movie! Then your Dad says, "Go to the basement, there's a turn off valve there, it's orange, just turn it and that will stop the water." At that moment you can trust your Dad or you can say to yourself, "That is a far-fetched idea; he's telling me to go to the basement. The problem isn't in the basement it's in here -- in the bathroom." You have a choice of either going to the basement and turning off the valve, which doesn't seem to have anything to do with your problem up in the bathroom, or you can keep on trying to get the insulating tape on the pipe. You know that it's plain and obvious what you should do in that situation, and yet it's very easy to keep thinking to yourself, "No -- my solution deals with the problem where it's occurring, and if I can only get this tape around this pipe this will deal with the situation." Yet what your father is saying is, "I built this house and I built into this system an answer to that kind of disaster; I built in a valve that will deal with that kind of disaster; I arranged for that, I foresaw this kind of situation."

Whenever you meet a difficult personal relationship situation, for instance a friend is critical of you, or a friend has lost trust in you; or you meet a situation in the office at work where tension has developed and along with that a whole series of misunderstandings, or you come into difficulty with your financial life or with your own physical health life, that is a burst pipe and the problem is not there, but further back in the system. In other words, what you're experiencing in the personal relationship that is broken down, or what you're experiencing in the office situation where tension and strife has risen, or what you're experiencing in your financial life or in your physical health life, is the bursting out of the elemental spirits of the universe that were released when our forefathers first distrusted God. And getting those elemental spirits back out is like trying to get all the water that sprayed all over the bathroom back in through the hole in that pipe; it's absolutely impossible to do it. But God has built into the whole system a miraculous death and victory in his son Jesus, where he can cut off the power of the elemental spirits of the universe. There is an event that took place in eternity and that was manifested here in time and space in 29AD where God destroyed the power of the elemental spirits of the universe to burst forth like that in your life. If you believe that, and begin to listen to him and listen to what he's telling you to do in order to manifest that power in your life, then you will begin to see your life's problems being solved. If you react in the way you did in the bathroom situation and say, "Look that has nothing to do with the problem that I'm facing in the office or the problem in my finances" then your life will continue to be full of leaky pipes, and you'll actually never solve them. Is it not true that many of us are so engrained into grabbing the insulating tape and trying to do some first aid on the burst pipe that our life, in fact, is full of leaky pipes? Some of them aren't leaking to badly; some of them are kind of a little bubbly, while some of them are quite a spurt.

All around our lives are leaky pipes because we have tried to deal with the problem by our own power and our own ability and our own manipulation instead of by exercising faith in this mighty turn off

valve that has been set into eternity in Jesus' death. We are so ingrained in grabbing for the plastic tape that God has to spend years training us in this other way. There are just two ways to live life: you can either live by your own power to manipulate the evil in yourself, the evil in other people, and the evil in your circumstances or try to somehow suppress it, or put tape around it, and hold it down and prevent it from absolutely destroying your life; or you can live by faith and belief in the miracle that God has wrought in Jesus, and act accordingly. Of course we are so used to the one way that it does take God a long time, with many of us, to bring us around to his method. Loved ones, that's what our walk in faith is about; God bringing us around to eventually see that only he can deal with the situation through his power in Jesus.

That is the story of Abraham's life that we have been studying. He was the same as us and that is why he was called the father of all them that believe, because he was like us, and we are very much like him. God had to take a long time to educate Abraham around to not grabbing the plastic tape, and to listening to him, and doing what he told him to do, in the light of what he arranged in Jesus.

Now if you would like to look at it loved ones, it is incredible how like our own lives Abraham's life is. His life really started off well; in Genesis 12:1, God gave him direction in connection with this great turn off valve that he had placed in Jesus, in his death, and Abraham started off well by trusting in God when he was seventy-five years of age. "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.' So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran." God asked Abraham to trust him and Abraham trusted him, so he started off well, but soon he began to tape up a leaky pipe.

In Genesis 12:10, "Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, 'I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.'" It's the old half lie that is absolute distrust of God, but it's your method of grabbing for a piece of plastic tape and trying to heal this problem that you have in your life. Of course that is what Abraham did; he started off well, but then backed off and grabbed for his own methods. God, of course, graciously rescued him and it's good to see that isn't it? Those of us who are inclined to be hard on ourselves; notice how little in God there is of "making us pay." He only makes us pay as little as he has to, to train us. It is good to remember that God isn't out to make us pay; he's out to teach us and train us, retrain us, reprove us, and make sure we're strengthened in that area. He doesn't make us pay, so he rescued Abraham from that hideous situation he got into with Pharaoh.

Then Abraham began to trust God with the next burst pipe. In Genesis 13:7 he began to rise into the spirit of this, and began to realize that, "God is my Father and I can trust him." Genesis 13:7; the pipe burst, "And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land. Then Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen; for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.'" Abraham

trusted God. Even a non-promising landscape will support plenty of cattle once it is passed through Jesus' death, and Abraham began to grasp that. He began to grasp that, "I can trust my Father; I don't need to grab for the best land here, I can trust him." So Abraham walked in faith and trusted him.

He trusted him in the next incident also, in Genesis 14:21. He had taken part in a victory with some other kings and they offered him part of the spoil, "And the king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.' But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'" So Abraham trusted God and didn't grab what he could get. Do you know how often this applies to our own hearts? Do you remember the numerous occasions when we're given the chance to grab a little something, and actually no one would know we grabbed it, but we would know in our hearts? Of course, God knows; and it spoils that sweet trust that is between us. That's what was so good about Abraham here, "No, I know I deserve part of the spoils, but I don't want you to believe that you've made me rich. I want everything to come from God." So he's beginning to grasp the fact that God wants us to realize that everything comes from him, and nothing comes from ourselves.

So Abraham began to walk in that way and God encouraged him. Eleven years have passed; Abraham was no longer of a man of seventy-five as he was when God first gave him the promise that he'd make him the father of many people, he was now eighty-six. God reassured him and prepared him for the next test that would strengthen his faith. So in Genesis 15 here is God reassuring him: "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." Often God does this for us; he gives us words from himself, "Rhema", that come into our hearts; something comes and we know it's God speaking to us and strengthening us, because he's going to give us another test to strengthen our own faith. Verse 2, "But Abram said, 'Oh Lord God, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abraham said, 'Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir.' And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.' And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you're able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." Abraham believed God. He said, "I'm eighty-six and its eleven years since God gave me the promise, but I believe him. I believe he will miraculously give me a son." Then he grabbed for the plastic tape.

Isn't it true so often with us as well; we come into a good, intimate time with God, and we should realize that he's preparing us for a little test that will strengthen our faith? We come into an intimate time with God and then our faith begins to drift and we grab for the plastic tape. That's what Abraham did; he believed God's promise; he believed that God would give him a son, so he had stopped being concerned about himself -- but he still had self's power. He had given up self's directions, but he still had self's power. He had given up the self-desire for exaltation, but he still had the life of the old creation and that's what he began to use.

In Genesis 16:1, "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid who's name was Hagar; and Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai." It was God's will he wanted; he wanted the son that God has promised him. Notice he slipped a little back from the spoils incident; there they offered him spoils and he said, "No, because I don't want you to think that you have made me rich." With Sarai he was with a dear one that he was

bound to by affection and here she was saying, very generously, "I cannot bear your son. Maybe God will bring your son to you through my maid Hagar." Remember, though, the hideous result of it all was that it was a disaster. Sarai became jealous of Hagar because Hagar bore Ishmael and the whole sequence of events that followed that. It is important for us to see that it wasn't that Abram wanted something for himself; it was that he wanted God's will with a little help from his own natural ability. It was that; he thought, "I'll help God out a little."

I think some of us get into that position and we don't realize that God has to, in a way, move back on us. In Abram's life this was the beginning of another fourteen years of education; God had to go right back with Abraham. I think we have a great tendency to say, "I thought that was God's voice. If that wasn't God's voice how will I ever know God's voice?" What we need to see is when we are dealing in this kind of situation, with our own natural strength, we have already dealt with carnality, we're already anxious to be used for God's Glory no matter what it costs us; we have died to self and died to selfishness. We need to see that the only hold Satan has on us after that is soulishness; using our soulish powers to bring about God's will, and that concerns deception. It's always the situation with deception; you think you're right, and you think you couldn't be wrong, and it's exactly that power that God has to break in you. So when you come into a situation like that don't be uppity. Don't be proud and say, "If that wasn't God's will, if I was wrong there, then how can I ever know God's will." That's pride. That's pride. No, bow down to the Father and say, "Father, I bow to the facts here. Here is Hagar and here is Ishmael out in the desert. The whole thing is an absolute mess. It's not the way I hoped it would turn out. I'm sure it's certainly not the way you wanted it to turn out. I bow to the facts; Lord whatever I thought was your will here, I was wrong. I bow down. Father, my mind obviously is beginning to interpret things wrongly and hear things wrongly. Lord, I bow to you; I have to trust you to lead me in the darkness through the Holy Spirit."

Loved ones, that's the answer; don't get uppity and say, "Oh well, if I'm wrong there I'll never know God's will." That's ridiculous for a little finite creature to dare to say that. All we can say is, "Father I missed it badly here. Lord, what I thought was the method of receiving your mind is obviously not, so I bow to you. Holy Spirit, I have to hold you harder to me. I have to hug you closer to me. I need you to lead me in the darkness here where I can't see myself." Really loved ones, that's the spirit; it's because we're walking in our minds and still trying to use our own best methods that we go astray on that kind of thing. Still, during those years God graciously spoke words of encouragement to Abraham and it's the same with us. Even through years of education he keeps speaking words to strengthen our faith and encourage our trusting in him and that's what God did with Abraham after almost another thirteen years had passed in Genesis 17:1, "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.'" He's so good; he's talking to a ninety-nine year old man who doesn't have his own son. "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you."

God goes on in Genesis 18:1, "And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him." You remember two of them were angels and of course the other one could only be Jesus himself, because no man had seen God at anytime, but the son has revealed him. Genesis 18:9, "They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'She is in the tent.' The Lord

said, 'I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him." So God encouraged Abraham to believe him.

Abraham began to trust God in connection with Sodom and Gomorrah; he became very real in his relationship with God, and he began to treat God according to his nature. He began to grasp him and began to be real with him. In Genesis 18:22, "So the men turned from there, and went towards Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the Lord. Then Abraham drew near, and said, 'Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?'" So Abraham is beginning to be real with God. "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In other words, Abraham is saying, "I know now through my experience with you, that you do deal justly and righteously, and you won't let me steal any of your glory, so I know what kind of God you are now." Abraham was beginning to be real with God.

Then in Genesis 20:1-2, after a great experience like that where he triumphed, as so many of us do, down he goes, and he grabs for the plastic tape. Genesis 20:1, "From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of Negeb, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, 'Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman you have taken; for she is a man's wife.'" Of course God began to get Abraham to the end of himself. God rebuked him and Abraham saw the disaster that he was about to bring yet again, and began to realize he could only lean on God every moment. If he ever leaned on his own power and ability at all, he was in the manipulating game; he was grabbing for the plastic tape and trying to sort things out himself. And at last God was able then to make the promise real in Genesis 21:1, "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him." So God gave to Abraham what he had promised and Abraham began to realize that God would supply all the answers to his life by his own power and that he could trust him alone; he could trust his Father.

What God wanted to be very sure of was that Abraham was not trusting the gift of a son, and was not trusting just because he could understand and he could see, but that he was trusting God; he was trusting God's omnipotent power, and not the methods by which God brought answers. That is why God brought to him this great trial and test which is a watershed in humanities relationship with its maker and its this whole incident of Isaac in Genesis 22:1, "After these things God tested Abraham and said to him 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here am I.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him."

Isn't that great – being so cool, so calm and obedient, and so trusting? This was the Abraham that went in to Hagar to get the son. This was the Abraham that kept telling his wife Sarah to tell lies; to say that she was his sister – this is that same Abraham; now so calm, cool and obedient and so trusting in the Father. At last this Abraham had stopped questioning God and had stopped trying to get God to come down to his level. He had stopped trying to get God to do things that he could understand with his own little mind. He had stopped asking God to explain things to him because he knew he couldn't understand even after God had explained it, but he could trust his Father even

where he could not see.

So Abraham simply obeyed God. And what God was anxious to bring home to him was, "I'm not only a God who can create, but if necessary I can create a whole series of grandchildren for you without you even having a son. Indeed I can destroy this son and raise him up again if I need to. You can trust me implicitly with him. Don't grab onto him and think, 'This is the person of whom God is going to make his promise real in me.'" In other words, don't grab the girl or the guy and think, "This is the girl or guy through whom God is going to lead me on into the life of ministry he has for me." Don't do that; don't grab anything but God. Don't grab anything but him; don't grab hold of anything and say, "This is essential." There is nothing essential but God. God himself can make everything else real; he can create; he can call into existence the things that do not exist.

You remember in Hebrews Chapter 11 how the Bible's own comment on what Abraham thought when God spoke to him in that way. Hebrews 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac your descendants be named." He considered that God was able to raise man even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."

In that deep primeval time, God somehow got through to Abraham; "I have a son in whom I have destroyed all your weakness and all your sin, and I have raised you up and made you whole and complete in him, and through him I can make life where there is no life. So have no fear whether Isaac appears dead to you, or alive, I can make him the method by which I prosper you and by which I bring you your children. Abraham had gotten to that point where he had now begun to trust God despite the appearances. So it's touching as we go on in the account; Genesis 22:4, "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." No evidence of a tremor, not a moment of hesitation, no doubt; because the man who doubts can expect nothing from the Lord; but he had, rather a deep, confident, peace.

Faith is not a fiddler on the roof; faith is not a balancing act. It's not a razors edge kind of thing where it looks as if the kind of thing that God was going to use to bring this about is no longer there. It's not that; it's not an uptight thing. It's not an, "I set that deadline; if you don't act, then Lord I'll know you don't want me to." It's not that. And it's not a certain, "The Lord told me to do this" or "The Lord told me to do that and if I don't do that he won't answer me." God isn't like that. God doesn't make life tense and strained and fill it with all kinds of obligations. God is a dear, great Father who gets us to have a deep confidence in him so that we move like a solid tanker ship that has no intention of turning back. That's what you get from Abraham; no tentativeness, no hesitation, no doubting.

I think it is probably true loved ones, that it's because of our doubting and our hesitation and our up and down stuff that we do not see the miracles that God wants to manifest among us. I don't think we should go at it like soulish little bulls; "I'm taking a place of faith here" or "I'm taking a stand of faith here." There is to be a deep friendship with the Father by which he begets in us a confidence that he wants to do that and then we just walk on with that deep confidence and we never hesitate. We don't need to actually get into the business of throwing away our glasses, we don't. That's not proving faith; it's only trying to bribe God. We don't need to get into those situations, into those tight situations, those aren't what God is looking at; he knows plenty of people who can throw away the glasses, give up their jobs, or who can give up their bodies to be burned, yet they still don't trust him. God is looking for a deep, confident, trust that has peace in the heart. So

when you look forward with a little tremor or fear in your heart to the week ahead, that's not faith. God can see that tremor and that little lack of peace. When you begin to be happy in your life, and you begin to look forward to the week, and begin to have trust in that Father, then the Father begins to see that, and he is able to manifest himself.

This is the situation with Abraham in verse 6, "And 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 they went both of them together". It's nothing to do with "Would you be prepared to give up your son." You Dad's and Mom's know it's nothing to do with that; God does not kill children; God is not interested in killing children. Satan kills children. God doesn't kill children. Anybody who ever say's, "The Lord asked me if I would be prepared to slay my son." Well God doesn't ask you to do that and that's not what God was asking. God was saying to Abraham, "You trust me that I will give you thousands of children through this son of yours Isaac; do you trust me that I can raise him from the dead if necessary so that, that will take place? Is your trust in me, or no is it beginning to go off me, the invincible God, and onto the invincible son? Are you beginning to think this son could have a wife and could marry and have children?"

Sometimes the Father prospers us, and then our trust goes onto the money. Sometimes the Father gives us a girl or guy and then our trust goes on to the girl or guy. God has to keep the trust in him because all other ground is sinking sand. "We dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name." That's what God is about here; he never asked a man to kill his son; he was saying to Abraham, "Do you believe that I could raise this man from the dead so that I could keep my promise to you?" So in verse 7, "And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!' and he said, 'Here am I, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the land for a burnt offering?'" That's that moment – do you remember in "A Man for All Seasons" that's the moment which God gives to all of us in every faith situation; that's the moment when you hold in your life in your hand like water; and if you open your fingers a little, it's gone.

There are moments of decision, there are moments of faith, when you let the whole thing go or you hold steady. God gives you these moments and he gave it to Abraham. What could be more beseeching? What could be more touching? "And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here am I, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'" That's the moment when you trust God to give you the words to speak; but you remain confident in him and you don't back off. "Abraham said, 'God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.' So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there." So you have to do everything; there is action; faith is action, not feeling. You'll have to make arrangements, you'll have to get the ticket to India, you'll have to make the moves. "Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. Then Abraham put forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

God answers at the last moment and he has reasons for it; he knows that the only proof you trust him is when you trust him right up to the very last moment. I don't know the whole explanation for healing, none of us do, even of sickness; but I can see that often the only way to know whether God wants to apply the healing of Calvary to you by removing the symptoms or giving the strength of Jesus' life so that you are able to continue obeying him whatever the symptoms may be; or whether he wants to apply the victory of Jesus' life in removing you, as he did my dad, and giving him a completely new body in heaven; I think the only way you can know that is if you believe right up until the moment of death or of life. It seems that God will often take us up until the last moment.

I think many of us lose it all because as we get close to the last moment, we give up our faith. It seems to me if God has given me a conviction of something I'd better hold onto it until the last moment. If the son dies then, like David, you say, "Lord, your will has been done." If you lose the job then you say, "Lord, your will has been done; I believed as you told me to, but your will has been done. But it seems loved ones that you have to stay right up to the last moment.

In verse 11, "But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here am I.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.'"

Does God know that you fear him? That's what we are always conscious of ourselves; that we have an Isaac somewhere in our lives that we would not be prepared to slay; we would not be prepared to risk our Isaac with God; maybe God wouldn't give him back to us. That's why many of us miss that second rest reserved for the people of God, where we begin to relax in the Father's arms, and where we leave our whole life in his hands and begin to do what he tells us. Often it's because we have some Isaac; sometimes our reputation, sometimes our appearance, sometimes our wife or children, sometimes our job, sometimes the silliest things are our Isaac that we are not prepared to trust in the Father's hands. Well, you see, you are holding out against God; if you can't trust him with the dearest thing in your life, then you don't trust him, and he knows you don't. He knows you are your own god and he cannot bless and prosper your life.

So do you have an Isaac? Do you have an Isaac that God is asking you to put on the altar? Not that God is asking you to let go of to lose; he is asking you to put him on the altar so that he has the freedom to choose whether to give him back to you or to take him. Too often we say, "No, no, we won't risk that." Loved ones, there is nowhere to go -- do you see that? I feel for every one of you that has an Isaac; don't you see that there is nowhere to go? If you can't trust God, who can you trust? You can't trust yourself because you will be dead in forty or fifty years and you will have no power over your own life or death. If you can't trust God with the sweetest and the dearest thing that is your treasure, it's madness! It's Satan that gets us into that deception, making us think that somehow with this thing we are more powerful or safer than we would be in God's arms. It's a lie and a deception; there is no one more trustworthy with your dearest treasure than the Father. God knows what you can do without, and indeed he knows what you need to do without, and he knows what you, alone, need for your happiness. Have you ever thought through it thoroughly; that the reason God made us was to make us happy? Have you ever thought of that? The only reason God has made us is so that we will be happy with him, and he knows what will make us happy. He says, "Trust me my children, trust me; I'll take from you only what will make you sad and I'll give you only what will make you happy." That's what he says about our "Isaacs."

In verse 13, "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram." And there's a great hymn that says that ram was Jesus, God's only son and that's who the ram was; Jesus. "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son." So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord will provide; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'" That's the place of perfect faith that Abraham came to. If you come to that place where you come into situations from little things like losing money to bigger things like your dear Dad or your dear Mom dying, or to other things like absolute bewilderment of your finances or your job; have you come to a place where you can say from your heart, "The Lord will provide" yet you have no idea where it's coming from? In other words you say it not because you have an idea that, "There's my rich uncle and he might send me something." Or not

because you think "Oh well, God could probably work it this way anyway; he's pretty bright so he probably knows that." But where you can't see any way for it to work at all and yet you say confidentially, because of the trust you have in your Father, "The Lord will provide?" That's a great phrase and we should learn "The Lord will provide." Ted Hegre [founding member of Bethany House Fellowship in Minnesota] drove me crazy; when it came to situations in Bethany Fellowship and they didn't know which way to go he would say, "The Lord will provide." I didn't realize that he had got it from Abraham and that that is the proclamation of faith, "The Lord will provide" when it comes deep from your heart and isn't just a word.

Verse 15, "And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you'" God is free to bless you when you come into that place of perfect faith, "and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which in on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice." And that's so with us; God opens the windows of heaven and pours the blessings upon us when he knows we trust him, finally, with everything.

"So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba." Then God begins to work in India and Africa, preparing the place for your dwelling. He begins to work all around and supply things. "Now after these things it was told to Abraham, 'Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz the first-born, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel.' Bethuel became the father of Rebekah." And Rebekah was the one that married Isaac, so God goes out ahead of you and prepares your wife for you. God begins to bring all things into order as you come into perfect trust in him. "These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah."

So God is asking us to live in the same faith as Abraham the father of all them that believe. I would encourage you; if you have an Isaac anywhere in your life, to put him on the alter and to begin to take the attitude every day in your life, "The Lord will provide" especially where you cannot see. Why not start it tonight in a deep commitment and then in the days of this week when you come into situations and you say from your heart "The Lord will provide" God sees from heaven, and he works miracles in your life.

So I bring before you again the challenge: have you ever seen miracles worked in your life? Isn't it true that too many of us have just seen the results of our own actions, and we haven't seen too many miracles where we can point and say, "That was a miracle?" Now why not begin; let's start trusting God and let's throw away the plastic tape and stop trying to bind up the leaky pipes. Start looking at the miracle on Calvary where all was put right in our lives.

Let's pray.

Dear Father, we can look around at many of our friends and relatives and colleagues and see lives filled with leaky pipes. We see their lives passing and them growing older, and still somehow feeling that it's been an anticlimax; feeling that it's all going to end not with a bang, but a whimper. Father, we see how our friends and colleagues get used to that kind of dead life, a dying life where they aren't very sure of the way they are going, but at least it's a bearable way and it doesn't seem to have any great disasters in it. Except Lord that we know it's going to have one

terrible disaster in it at the end and they know that too.

Father, it seems plain sense to us that that is no way to live our lives; the whole complicated universe must have been created by you for something better than that; for something better than a make-do kind of life that fiddles along and meanders along, going down-hill and up-hill, around this bend and that bend, with no great sense of direction and no sense of power or miracle in it. Lord we do not want that kind of life. Father we'd rather be like [Mother] Teresa and work in the midst of dirt and filth and sickness in Calcutta in India. We'd rather do something like that and sense that our life was for something or that it had your touch upon it rather than dream away our lives in our best efforts.

Father, if there is an Isaac in our life, and Lord, we are sorry if you have spoken to us about it before, but, Lord, if our eyes have become so blind with deception that we're not sure of what it is, will you reveal it to us again? Make it clear to us. Make clear to us Father where we are not trusting you and not resting in you. Enable us to see if there is an idol or if there is something that we feel is too precious to trust the God of the universe with. Then Lord convict us of that and enable us, by your grace, to begin to obey in the same way that Abraham did, and to trust you and walk forward in confidence, and when we miss the way, to get up and say we're sorry and go on again, ever trusting in you. Father we want to move that way so that you will be delighted with us and will realize that we really do trust you, dear Father, with everything we have and with our very selves. We love you and trust you Father. We are very willing to go out on the limbs of faith for you, and to begin to act and to begin to do what you tell us to do, so that the miracle power of Jesus' death and resurrection can make all things right in our lives, and in those that we touch during the next thirty or forty. We ask this for Jesus' glory.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now, and evermore. Amen.