

# GENESIS 22:15-23:20

## GRIEVING AND MOVING FORWARD

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Have you ever had something that you wanted in the worst way? How many of you remember the Sears Wish Book that would come out every year a few months before Christmas? Sears knew what they were doing. They would send this catalog to the house that was packed full of toys and all the other things over which children drooled. In that book I could always find something that I felt that I just had to have. No matter how silly it was to anyone else. Every year I would find something in that book that I would have sold my sister or almost anything else I had in order to get the thing I wanted.

Now this illustration is not one of just wanting something so badly that we would do anything to get it. It is however, an illustration of how we hang on to a dream and attempt to convince others that we are on the right track in pursuit of this dream. Today we will see that Abraham had spent the majority of his adult life in pursuit of a promise. As he approached the end of his life, he still didn't have much of anything tangible to show for his pursuit of that dream.

Last week we ended with God halting Abraham when he was about to sacrifice his only son Isaac. There is a lot of symbolism in this chapter as well as the next few. It will be important to see not only what is said, but what is not said.

It must have been a relief in many ways, for Abraham to hear God and have his son spared. God provided a ram caught in a thicket for a sacrifice. God then reiterated His promise to Abraham.

***Gen. 22:15-18***

***15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because***

*you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”*

We need to begin to look at the symbolism that is beginning to take shape here. Notice the recurrence of the phrase - your son, your only son. This should sound familiar.

**Joh 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

It not only gives us the foundation for the symbolism, it also once again rules out Ishmael as the son of promise.

We have to see how Abraham, the father, was going to sacrifice his only son, for the plan of God. We also need to remember as we talked about it last week, that Isaac had to be obedient in this also or he could have easily overpowered his father. Jesus was obedient in going to the cross for us. He asked for a way out, but then succumbed to the will of His Father.

**Mat 26:39** *He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

**26:42** *Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."*

So as we go through the next several chapters, look for the ways in which Isaac fits as a "type" of Jesus.

Abraham is then promised that his seed will number as the stars of the Heaven and the sands of the sea. He is promised that his descendants will possess the gate of their enemies. And then in verse 18 we see that the whole earth will be blessed because he obeyed the voice of God.

We need to think about that for a little while.

Our obedience affects others, not only in our immediate sphere of influence, but also for years to come. We affect our children, our family, and our co-workers. And it doesn't stop there. Our influence over them works its way out in concentric circles. We can thereby affect multitudes. This is known as the butterfly effect. We should use it to our advantage.

We can never go wrong by obeying God. It does result in hard choices, but the end result is always for the better.

**Gen 22:19** So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

Notice that there is no mention of Isaac here. In fact, you won't hear of him again until he rides out to take his bride. Remember how I told you to look for the symbolism?

Jewish literature of the time states that Isaac was sent to study in Jerusalem under Shem. (Melchizedek)

**Gen. 22:20-24**

***20 Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, "Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." 23 And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor,***

***Abraham's brother. 24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.***

These verses set the stage for chapter 24 where Abraham tells his servant to go get a bride for Isaac from amongst his kinfolk. These verses aren't just arbitrarily placed here.

We need to remember that Abraham had just come a very stressful experience. He had almost killed his son as a sacrifice to God. He was then spared from that and then had God's promise reiterated to him. In verse 12, he had once again gotten God's approval for the faith he had shown. Abraham had also seen this entire episode as an opportunity to worship. (Verse 5)

How many of us can say we take such stressful predicaments as an opportunity to worship? Remember, worship is not just singing or raising our hands. As Pastor Malcolm Wild puts it, "Worship is submitting ourselves to the will of God." That is the most pure definition of the word.

We would say that Abraham has been on a roller coaster of sorts. He had to send Ishmael away with bread and water. He then had to take Isaac to a mountain to potentially sacrifice him. At the appointed time God halted the sacrifice, provided a substitute (typology) and finished the episode by praising Abraham for his faith and then promised him a multitude of seed and a great deal of land. So Abraham is riding high as he comes home without his son, and I'm sure he is anxious to tell Sarah all about the event!

However, when he got home, look at the news he got. He is told of his brother's large family! Think about it! He came home to Sarah with a whopper of a story and God's promise of many children and land. Sarah then tells him of his brother's growing family! Bummer dude! This could have been very disconcerting. Abraham returned home without Isaac and a reiteration of God's promises. But he still has nothing

tangible. And the lack of tangible blessings doesn't stop there. Look at chapter 23.

**Gen. 23:1,2**

***1 Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.***

I can't imagine losing someone I had been with for 100 years.

- The death of my grandfather
- Elusive dreams; dragging Sarah around following God's promises

a. **Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years:** Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death is recorded; it gives us some measure of how highly she is regarded in the Bible.

b. **The life of Sarah:** Nowhere in in the Bible are we told to look to Mary the mother of Jesus as an example of a godly woman. Twice we are told to look to Sarah as such an example ([Isaiah 51:1-2](#) and [1 Peter 3:3-6](#)).

**2. (2) Abraham's mourning.**

**So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.**

a. **Abraham came to mourn for Sarah:** Abraham felt his loss of Sarah deeply and wasn't afraid to mourn, though he did not sorrow as those without hope ([1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)).

i. "That is, he set himself deliberately to all the functions of a mourner." (Boice)

b. **And to weep for her:** Abraham's mourning was demonstrated in an appropriate way. The man of great faith, the friend of God, wept for the loss of Sarah's companionship.

i. "To weep for a loved one is to show that we have been close, that the loss is keenly felt, that death is an enemy, and that sin has brought this sad punishment upon the human race." (Boice)

*3 Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 4 "I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."*

*5 And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, 6 "Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead."*

*7 Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. 8 And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you."*

*10 Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying, 11 "No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!"*

*12 Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; 13 and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will give it, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there."*

*14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 15 "My lord, listen to me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead." 16 And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he*

*had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.*

*17 So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded 18 to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.*

*19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.*

- Haggling over land (See Liberty regarding Hittite land laws; Landowner had to pay tribute tax to the king. This is why Ephron would not sell just the cave.)
- Still a sojourner in the land, no ownership
- Had land and grazing rights (wells) but owned no land
- Most of us can appreciate the difference between owning and renting
- His humility in buying the land even though God had already promised it to him.
- He has been promised seed numbering as the stars of Heaven and the sands of the sea, yet he has one son.
- He has been promised the land of Canaan and then some, but all he has is a cave and a field, in effect a family cemetery.

### ***Heb. 11:8-16***

***8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and***

*Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

*11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

*13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

He still clung to the promise of God, and it was counted to him as faith. He would have been nothing other than obscure nomad had he not believed God. Now he is known as the patriarch of the world's 3 largest faiths.

None of us will ever be that famous, but we can still be known to those around us as people of faith, clinging to the promises of God despite what others may say or what little we may have to show for it.