



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 22:1-24

“The Old Testament’s Greatest Scene”

TRANSCRIPT

Will you turn with me to Genesis, chapter 22 and listen as I read the 19 verses which open this chapter? Genesis chapter 22, verse 1 through verse 19 for our Scripture reading.

“Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said. ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, and he split wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day, Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance, and Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you.’

“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 the two of them walked on together and Isaac spoke to Abraham, his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here am I am,

my son.’ And he said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.’

Incidentally you will notice that in the opening part of this account, there is a speed, a celerity almost in the writer’s mind getting to this section, but now the account stops and we have it slow moving and the details are stressed. This is the important part of the account. Verse 10.

“And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ and he said, ‘Here I am,’ and he said, ‘Do not stretch out your hand against the lad and do nothing to him for now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.’ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

“And Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of the Lord it will be provided.’ Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

You will notice, those of you that have been following very carefully the account of Abraham’s life and Abrahamic promises, that in that last clause, we have something new “and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.” That suggests that there will be a conflict and that the seed of Abraham shall overcome, and thus we have continuation of the original Protevangelium, the first preaching of the gospel, the original promise made to Adam and to Eve in the garden of Eden. Verse 16,

“And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ So Abraham returned to his young men and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.”

I will close the reading here. May the God bless this reading of His word!

The subject for this morning is “The Old Testament’s Greatest Scene.” Can there be any doubt at all that the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham is one of the greatest scenes in the history of God’s salvation? It is surpassed only by that of the Son of God. When the greatest father offered up his Isaac, the story here finds its ultimate climax in anti-type. Christ’s cross, which is the fulfillment of the sufferings of Isaac, surrounds the latter with reflected glory and makes it one of the most famous types, if not the most famous in all of the Bible, of the sufferings of Christ. Abraham was tested at the point of his love for God and that really is the ultimate test.

It's remarkable that Abraham succeeded. One might think that it might have taught us more if he had failed, but we find here proof of the fact that a mortal man may actually make a decision that is ultimately for God. Here is evidence of a childlike faith that must have thrilled the heart of our eternal Father. Now I am sure that if were faced with a test like this, we would like to say well that’s the kind of decision that we would make. But for most of us, the air upon heights like that is a little too rare to breathe with comfort.

Remember that the Lord Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me.” Of course, we have listened to enough theology in Believers Chapel to know that the reason that Abraham was able to make this decision was not because of anything in Abraham’s life or in Abraham naturally. As a matter of fact, Abraham could not even stand up to a Pharaoh or to an Abimelech. Even then, he would lie and say, she is really my sister and not my wife. And so we know from the teaching of the word of God that it is because of that which God had implanted in Abraham and the aid that he gave Abraham, that Abraham was able to meet this test and pass it successfully. The experiences of life bring us tests that are similar to Abraham’s. Most of us, at one time or another, have faced tests like this and if we have not, well, we are going to face them like that.

A gifted preacher of a last generation used to tell the story of a woman who was broken by a great tragedy in her life. She had been living under the crushing burden of this difficulty for a long time and as a result of it, the praise that she used to give to God had now turned to complaint. And finally one time, in great bitterness of soul over what had happened to her, she said, “Oh! Would to God that I had never been made.” And in response to her rebellious words, a friend said, “My dear child, you have not been made yet, you are only being made and what you are doing is quarreling with the processes of God by which he is making you what you are.”

The experiences of life are designed to bring us to maturity and in Abraham’s case, this is the final test; the test at the point of the love of God. Will you give up Isaac for the love of God? Now there are other important things in this chapter and it’s sad that we cannot spend a long time on this particular chapter because there are so many things in it.

For example, here we have another link in one of the great themes of the Bible, the theme of the Lamb of God. We have seen from Genesis, chapter 4, Abel making his offering of the firstlings of the flock and here we have in Genesis chapter 22, another

stage in the unfolding of the doctrine of the Lamb of God. In the Book of Exodus, we will have still another in the Lamb of the Passover Supper and through the Old Testament on into the Book of Isaiah where we will read about a lamb that is led as or one who is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and in the New Testament, it is John the Baptist who says, “Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” And then in the climactic scene in Revelation chapter 5, John looks and sees not the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, but surprisingly one as it were a slain lamb in heaven. It is of course a reference to the Lord Jesus and that theme of the Lamb of God is one of the greatest of the themes of the Bible, and here in Genesis chapter 22, we have an important link in that doctrine.

We also have another interesting thing that I have not made very much comment upon as we have gone through the book of Genesis to this point and that is the hermeneutical principle of the Law of First Mention. Many Bible students have noticed that when important words, important doctrinal words, are first mentioned in the book of Genesis, they are usually invested with a certain meaning which they have through the rest of the Bible. And so it has been called the Law of First Mention. And so if you will be on your guard and notice the first mention of important terms, you will probably find some help in the context with regard to their ultimate meaning.

For example, this is the first time that we have the word “test” in the Bible. It is the first time that we have the word “love” in the Bible. And that’s rather interesting because it is the love of a father for a son. And when we turn to the New Testament and read Matthew, Mark and Luke, we notice that the first references to love in these gospels is the reference of the love of the father for the son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and even in the book of John, the first reference is John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” In other words, it would seem from this that we are to define true love, what love is, by the love of the father for the son.

There are other words that are mentioned for the first time. For the first time, God swears in Genesis chapter 22 and it's swearing with reference to the promises of God, reminding us of the inviolability of the promises that are given by Him. Well, we won't have time to speak of those things, but I want you to be able to read the Bible and look for things like that and profit from them.

We turn now to Genesis chapter 22 and the preparation for the sacrifice. We read now it came about after these things. Well, now we look in the preceding context and we have read in verse 34, Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days. Sarah was 93 to 95 years of age when Isaac was weaned. Now Abraham stayed in Beersheba or in the land of the Philistines for many days. So a period of time has elapsed and it came to pass after these things that the test regarding Isaac took place. Now we know Sarah’s age. Incidentally she is the only woman in the Bible whose age is given. Isn’t that interesting? Isn’t that interesting, ladies? In other words, there is some scriptural justification for concealing the years it would seem. The question is do you want to be like Sarah or like the rest of the women of the Bible?

Now a woman’s age, I have mentioned to you before, a woman’s age can be divided into seven periods. There is the infant, the little girl, the miss, the young woman, the young woman, the young woman, and the young woman. [Laughter] So Sarah lived to be 127 years of age, so there is approximately 35 years between the weaning of Isaac and her death. Now we would presume from this that Isaac, when he was offered up, was at least 15-17 years of age, some have even suggested he was as old as 25 years of age.

Now it is true he is called a lad and the term *na’ar*, the Hebrew word *na’ar* is used with reference to him, but that word is also very elastic in its meaning, and it could refer to someone as old as 25 years of age. So Isaac was a man who had, within himself, the strength and the power to resist Abraham if he had so willed. Now it came to pass after these things. So many years after the weaning of Isaac that God tested Abraham.

We have no reference incidentally to God speaking to Abraham in the intervening period of time.

So suddenly after many years of silence, the blow fell and it fell like a bolt from the blue and it brought him to the climax of the testing of God. It was the severest test of Abraham’s life. “Abraham, here I am. Take now your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac.” Incidentally when we read here God tested Abraham, we are not to think of him testing Abraham to bring out the evil. He tested him to bring out the good that he had worked in. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” Paul told the Philippians, “for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” So those decisions that we talk about so much are really decisions that are ultimately determined by God himself.

It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So whenever we make a decision that is pleasing to the Lord, it is because he has already worked in us. Now the tests of God are not designed to cause us to fail. The tests of God are designed to bring out that which he has worked in, in order that he may be glorified. Putting this on the human level, this was the test of the trust in God versus human affection. Incidentally also, when God tests us, it's not because He is angry with us. We tend to think that He is testing us because He wants to discipline us. Well, it's true. At times, the things that happen to us are the disciplines of God. If we refuse the tests of life, well then the disciplines of God will come and it will be necessary for us to pass through some very disagreeable experiences. If we are disorderly at the Lord’s Table, some will be weak, some sickly, some even may lose their lives.

But the tests of God are, on the other hand as a general rule, God’s vote of confidence in us. They are, in effect, his approval of us because he feels that we are at the stage where we can meet the tests of God and his power and strength. And so when you are suffering the trials of life and the tests of life, do not look at those things as evidences of the discipline of God always. Look at them as opportunities to come to

understand something of the sustaining power of God in the experiences of life. Think of them as something that God wants to do in order to demonstrate what he has already done in you.

I notice the words of the command that came from God to Abraham. “Take now your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac.” The order of these words is calculated to raise the affection of Abraham for his son to the highest pitch. “Take now your son.” Think of that. “Your only son.” Ishmael is gone now. “Your only son, the son whom you love.” Isaac. Laughter. Mr. Spurgeon says, “If George Herbert were speaking of it, he would say the words are all a case of knives cutting at Abraham’s soul. There is scarcely a single syllable of God’s address to him, in the opening of this trial, but seems intended to pierce the patriarch to the quick. It is first ‘take now your son.’ A father slay a son? Of all the possessions of Abraham and he had many, why his son? And then he adds ‘your only son.’ The word, only, takes on a special meaning, for Ishmael has just recently been sent away to the wilderness and there follows the words ‘whom you love.’ He is reminded of the great love for his only begotten just at the moment when he is to lose him. Oh, stern word that seemeth to have no bowels of compassion in it. Was it not enough to take away the loved one without at the same instant awakening the affections which were so rudely to be shocked?”

So I think you can catch something of the force of this. “Take now your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah.” Now the love is designed to mirror the father’s love, but the place is interesting too. Why the land of Moriah? Moriah is mentioned in one other place; in 2 Chronicles chapter 3 and verse 1. You learn from the Old Testament that Mount Moriah was the place where Solomon’s Temple was later to be built and so consequently, it is the place that is on the level with Calvary and from which Calvary may be seen. And in addition, it was the place where thousands of animals were later to be sacrificed.

Someone has said hecatombs of animals were slain right on the spot. It was as if God were to say to him, “Take Isaac, offer him on Mount Moriah, the very place where the animals of the Old Testament will be sacrificed in the temple those that point forward to the Lamb of God who will be offered in the centuries that are to come. And so it's on Mount Moriah that Isaac is to be offered up. All of this, of course, anticipating the sufferings of Christ. It is a beautifully rich typical chapter of biblical teaching.

Now Abraham’s response is the response of quick obedience. “So Abraham rose early in the morning.” What a lesson for Christians! When the word of God has been given, quick instant obedience is the response that should be made. “He rose early in the morning. He saddled his donkey. He took two of his young men.” Notice that because we will comment on that in a moment. “Two of the young men went with him and Isaac, his son. He split the wood for the burnt offering and he arose and went to the place of which God had told him.”

This quick obedience has been called the habit of instantaneity. That is the habit of doing things instantly. What a tremendous thing it would be if when we read the word of God and we see what God wants us to do, see His will, we should instantly obey! Now, they reach Mount Moriah and the two young men are left and Abraham and Isaac make their way toward the top. We think of the ways in which our Lord went from the Judge Pilate to the cross of Calvary and we call it the *Via Dolorosa*, that is, sad way that our Lord traversed to Mount Calvary. Well this was Isaac’s *Via Dolorosa* as he and Abraham made their way to the top of the mountain. But before they went, Abraham turned to the young men and he said, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder, and we will worship.”

What is worship? Someone has defined worship as worth-ship or recognizing the worth of an individual. Recognizing the worth-ship of God, that’s true worship to recognize His worth-ship. So isn’t that interesting that at the greatest test of Abraham’s life, he is occupied with the excellencies of His God? “I and the lad will go up to the top

of the mountain and there we will worship.” Now I think there is something important here. Right at the moment of the greatest test of Abraham’s life, he is undergirded by the knowledge that he has of the Holy One. That’s important. It seems to say to me this; that at the greatest of the experiences of life, the times when we are most troubled and tested by God, the times of the tragedies, the times of the trials, the times of the difficulties, the things that help us in these experiences are the knowledge of the excellencies of our great God.

I know in my own family, there are Christians in my family who have attended churches where the gospel is no longer preached. The gospel used to be preached in these churches, but it is no longer preached. I remember particularly one who was especially close to me, a man who was a godly man in many ways, but at the same time he had unfortunately been exposed in the latter 30 or 40 years of his life to the ministry that came from a pulpit that was Christian, but that is about all that could be said. There was no exposition of the word of God and I remember this person saying to me, “We just do not have the exposition of the Bible,” and when the time came to face up to the question of leaving this life and going to be with the Lord, when undergirded by the knowledge of biblical truth, that experience might be faced in the strength of God, he was unable to do it.

Let me say to you, my dear friends, that when you come to the final tests of life, the one thing that will aid you more than anything else is the knowledge of the truth of God. The knowledge of the excellencies of our God. Now it seems to me that if this is true and I fully believe that it is true from my own limited experience, it is that that sustains a believer in the times of stress. How important it is then that we learn the doctrines of the word of God, the truths concerning the being and attributes of our God, the truths concerning the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now you don't have any excuse in Believers Chapel. We have tried in the ministry of the word of God, all of us who are continually teaching you in the Sunday

school, in the ministry here, in the Believers Bible Institute, the Advanced Study Center, our one goal has been to communicate the doctrines of the word of God in order that you might be strengthened for the experiences of life, and when they come, it is these great truths that will strengthen you. We want you to understand. That’s why we are doing it. It isn’t simply an order that you may learn some things and become an intellectual Christian so that you are able to look down upon the superficiality which so abounds in evangelicalism. That’s not the purpose. The purpose is to build you up in the great truths, so that when you face life, you will be able to face it in the strength of the Word of God.

So, Abraham goes up to the top of Mount Moriah in the greatest stress of life talking about worship, praising the God who has asked him to offer the ultimate sacrifice. Now did you notice too that he said, “I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship and return to you.” What a magnificent manifestation of faith in what God was going to do! You know there were many ways in which God might fulfill his own command. It was not Abraham’s part to figure out how God was going to do it. He had said sacrifice Isaac and he must obey. How God was going to bring Isaac back and make him the seed that He had promised, well that is God’s responsibility. Isaac really had been dead for three days in Abraham’s mind. Ever since the time that God had said, offer him as a sacrifice, Isaac was dead in the mind of Abraham. So this is the third day. They have arrived on the third day. The likeness to the sufferings of Christ and the resurrection of Christ is so obvious that there must be a point, that point in it. Now we might have wondered whether this really was the expression of a faith in the resurrection. “I and the lad will go yonder and worship and return again unto you” but in the New Testament, we have the comments of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I always like to stand by the apostles and the writers of holy Scripture. If you are going to have an interpretation and if they have got one, that’s the one I want to have, always. In fact, I want to stand with the apostles in everything as far as I am concerned. That’s good company because

they are in the company of our Lord. Here is what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “By faith Abraham when he was tested, offered up Isaac and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. It was he to whom it was said, In Isaac your seed shall be called. He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.” And so the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Abraham believed that God was able to raise him from the dead. And furthermore, he affirms that in Isaac’s return with Abraham, we have a type of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. How do you like that interpretation? Well, I like it.

Now we read that they walked on together. I read a comment a few days ago by one of the interpreters to the effect that if you say this little expression, “They walked on together,” which is repeated twice, has anything to do with the harmony of the father and the son in the mediatorial work, that’s not exegesis. Well it may not be exegesis according to that particular interpreter and of course when we are talking about illustrations from the Old Testament, we recognize these are illustrations and when we get to heaven, we may discover that there is a point or two that we’ve missed but it seems to me that this statement which is repeated twice is not repeated without significance. “So the two walked on together.”

And when we turn to the Gospel of John, we will find a number of places, I don't have time to turn to them, in which it is specifically said by our Lord Jesus that he is carrying out his ministry in close fellowship with the Lord, the Lord God, his Father. He says the things that I say are the things that he says to me. The things that I do, they are the things that he tells me to do. I am not alone. The Father is with me and the picture of Abraham; and Isaac walking up Mount Moriah together in spite of what the commentator says is very reminiscent to me of the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross at Calvary in beautiful harmony with the Father in the performance of his mediatorial work of sacrifice.

Now in the 6th verse we also read that “He took in his hand the fire and the knife and he bound Isaac.” Now I should also have said something about the two young men who were unable to ascend, but let me leave that for just a moment. Notice in the 6th verse it says, “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son.” Now that can surely remind us of the statement made by the Apostle John in the 19th chapter of the gospel in which we read these words. “They took Jesus therefore and he went out bearing His own cross.” And so it is Isaac who must carry the wood for the burnt offering, but notice who has the fire and notice who has the knife. It is Abraham who has the fire and it is Abraham who has the knife.

We read, in the Old Testament, some very interesting things about the sufferings of the Messiah who is to come. We read for example that when the time comes for the sufferings of the cross that there is no man there. There is none to help. The Messiah speaks in that way too in places in the Old Testament. There was none to help at the point of the intense suffering as the Redeemer, there is no one to help the Redeemer, and furthermore in the time of judgment when he comes again at his Second Advent, there is no one to help there.

Why these references in the Old Testament? Well, to let us know that only the Father and the Son truly know the price that is paid for the redemption of our sins. Those two men who accompanied them to Mount Moriah are left at the bottom of the Mount and it is Abraham who is the figure of the Father and Isaac who is the figure of God the Son who know what transpires in the atoning ministry that is to be accomplished ideally ultimately on Calvary’s cross. It is only the Father and it is only the Lord Jesus who really know how much it cost for our sins to be redeemed. The prophets say things like this. “All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The Lord has caused to smite upon Him.” That’s the fire and the knife, the fire of divine judgment and the knife of divine judgment, and so it is Abraham, the father, who must pierce Isaac the son just as it is the

father who must direct in the sufferings of the Redeemer, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a beautiful picture of aspects of the suffering of the Lord Jesus hundreds of years before it actually took place! He hath made Him to be sin for us. Only the Father knows what that means and the Son who suffered that penalty.

Well, Isaac says as they make their way, “where is the lamb?” and Abraham replied, God will provide for Himself a lamb. That too is very significant. The way of salvation is the way of salvation provided by God. Isaac’s question has its ultimate answer when John the Baptist sees the Lord Jesus coming and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Well they reach the top and now the account slows down. And the details are given. There Abraham built the altar. I wish that I were able to see it. Maybe one of these days, we shall actually have a kind of video account of what happened and I would like to see exactly what the old man did when he reached the top. He knows what he has to do, but he is a father who loves his son and I can imagine that he looks around first for those rocks and he sees some rocks nearby and some faraway, and he says I think those that are faraway will do a whole lot better, and so he delays it. He moves out and takes the farthest ones. He comes back.

He piles them up and he says, “No it won't do to just pile them up indiscriminately. They will have to be piled up symmetrically.” And so he spends time on the altar and then finally the moment comes when he must speak in further detail to his son Isaac and inspiration draws a kind of veil over this last tender scene. The father’s announcement of what he is going to do, the sobs, the kisses, the signs of affection between the father and the son, and then finally the binding of the young man and the placing him upon the altar.

And so Isaac, the willing victim, is placed on the altar on top of the wood and Abraham reaches for the knife, takes the knife, and just as he is about to plunge it into the heart of Isaac, the Angel of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, calls forth from heaven, “Abraham,

Abraham!” My mind goes back to Calvary of course when our Lord was there and at the point at which he is bearing the spiritual sufferings of our redemption reflected in the “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” There is no Angel of the Lord to call out to the father and say, “Abraham, Abraham” then, but the knife must be plunged figuratively into the heart of the Son of God in order that the sufferings might take place that we might have redemption. The lamb led to the slaughter.

Well Abraham passes his final exam and all the great truths of the Bible are suggested by this passage. I want to mention something which I think is important. I say all the great truths of the Bible are found right here. For example, there is the voluntary death of Isaac. We have no evidence that Isaac resisted it at all, and in this he is the perfect example of the Lord Jesus who willingly offered himself up a sacrifice for us. There is the penal sacrifice suggested for there must be a death, the wages of sin is death, and in the slaying of the ram, there is an acknowledgement of the need for a death in order that redemption may take place, and so the penal sacrifice is taught here. And then in the substitution of the ram for Isaac, the son, we have the doctrine of substitution and incidentally it is an effective substitution. We read in verse 13, “and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son and Isaac went free by virtue of the animal that was slain for him.” It was an effective substitution.

And I think we have reflection of the fact that in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have individuals who are saved. Not all rendered savable, but certain ones who are saved. It is an effective substitution. Substitution which is not effective is not substitution. We have not defined that term correctly so often. We have the sufficiency of the work of God in salvation. It is God who provides the lamb. We have nothing to do with it. Salvation is of the Lord and the deliverance of Isaac was a salvation that ultimately came from the Lord.

Now, there is a text I want you to notice in a statement in verse 12. Notice he says, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad and do nothing to him for now I know

that you fear God since you have not withheld.” Let me retranslate that: “Since you have not spared your son, your only son from me.” Now I say spared because we are all familiar with the text in Romans chapter 8 in which the Apostle Paul writes, “He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” He that spared not His son, but delivered Him up for us all. Do you know where Paul got those words, “spare not?” Well, he got them right from this passage. In the Septuagint or the Greek translation of the Old Testament, we have the precise words that the Apostle uses in Romans chapter 8 and verse 32. It was his meditation upon this passage that led him to express the sufferings of our Lord in these words. “He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all.

Now let me say something to you. I say this in love and, I hope, friendly compassion. I have some good friends. They are good friends of mine. They call themselves four-point Calvinists. By that they mean that they believe in, they, say total depravity, unconditional election, efficacious grace, and the perseverance of the saints or the eternal security of the believer. They are firm that they are four-point Calvinists, but they don't believe in definite atonement. They don't believe that the Lord Jesus really died for those whom the father elected, but rather that he died for everyone.

Now in my opinion, this is only my opinion -- these are my friends -- in my opinion to say I am a four-point Calvinist is a code term. It's a code term that means that I am against the fifth point, against definite atonement because if I can catch my friends off guard and ask them, do you believe in free will, most of them, 90 percent of them, will say, “Oh yes, I believe in free will” little realizing that if they believe in free will, they cannot believe in total depravity, unconditional election, or efficacious grace. Really they are one-point Calvinists. As they say over in the South, they are whiskey Calvinists: they believe a fifth. [Laughter] Now there are, however, some true four-point Calvinists. Historically, they were called Amyraldians. That’s what they are! Amyraldians.

Now, I want to ask you a question. Is God confused? Is it possible that the Father elects a certain number of people, the Holy Spirit, and my friends who are four-point Calvinists believe this, that the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the elect only to bring them to Christ efficaciously? The Father elects a certain number. The Spirit brings this same number to Christ, but the Lord Jesus, contrary to the intentions of the Father and the Spirit, dies for all. Is it possible that we have the Father and the Spirit working toward one end and the Son working toward another? Do we have confusion within the persons of the Trinity? Is it possible that we have two votes for those who are elect and one for all and consequently, the Father and the Spirit, by democratic processes, have won out? Or is it possible that we believe in a frustrated deity? Is it possible that we believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the God Man intended to die for all, but he was unable to accomplish his purpose of saving all? Is that possible? Do we have a frustrated deity? Can we really believe in limited sovereignty? Do not those terms contradict one another?

Now I want you to look at the text in Romans 8. “He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all.” Notice the argument. How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? What does Paul mean by that? What he means, my dear friend, that if the Lord Jesus has offered himself up for us all, that’s the greatest thing that God could do. Now being the greatest thing that God could do, will anything less than that be withheld? “He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all. How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” If he really gave himself for us all, everything else is less than that. If he has given the most, he’ll surely give that which is least. The argument is an argument that is inviolable. The apostle states that if he really did this, everything else is less. If he gave himself for all, he will surely give the Holy Spirit to bring them to Christ.

Is it possible we have a God who loves the world enough to give Christ to die for it, but not enough to give the Holy Spirit to bring them to Christ? Is that the kind of God that we believe in? Well I must speak for myself. No, I don't believe in that kind of God.

I believe in a God who is not a frustrated deity but sovereign and who accomplishes his purposes. I have a friend who is reacting very much against this and he says, well, there is a lot of logic in what you are saying. Yes, it's biblical logic. But he has now come up with a doctrine of asymmetrical sovereignty and he tries to support that logically. So by logic, we will support illogic. Asymmetrical sovereignty. There is no such thing. You cannot argue for illogic by the use of logic. The Bible is plain and clear.

It's just that we have a difficult time accepting the doctrines about which I have been speaking. I know. I had a difficult time. I do have compassion for my friends who are struggling with this because I struggled with it for 10 or 15 years, but when we read, “He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” We are bound and determined to follow the teaching of that which we feel is the word of God.

Now, the chapter concludes with a commemoration of the name of the place by the name and a final swearing by God by which he swears that he will bless Abraham. That's new. Incidentally this is the first time that God swears in the Scriptures. Well, the issue is the issue of love for God. How much will a mortal man do for God's love? Well nothing apart from the preeminent grace of God. Not a single one of us would ever love God, not a single one of us would ever make a decision like Abraham made apart from the fact that God has poured forth into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, the love of God. And here Abraham reaches the climax of his spiritual experience in the offering up of Isaac and he is carried to victory by a sovereign master as anyone whoever does anything for the glory of God knows it is by a sovereign master that we are carried to victory.

The Lord Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me.” Abraham is worthy, but he is only worthy by the worth of his great God. In the New Testament, there is an interesting statement made. In John chapter 8 and verse 56, the Lord Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw

it and was glad.” Now I don't know that this is the day upon which Abraham saw the Lord Jesus who was to come, but it certainly seems to be an ideal term for him to come to a realization of the Lord Jesus who was to come. Seeing all that had transpired and how Isaac is saved through the sacrifice of the ram, it surely is a fitting occasion upon which Abraham might have come to a full understanding of the coming of the Lord Jesus and he looked down through the years and saw the redeemer who was to come. Perhaps in the mists of the future, he only recognized that a Redeemer, a personal Redeemer would come, but he saw it. And if that is the time, it makes no difference really. Abraham's life from this time on was determined, lit up by the experience on Mount Moriah.

I say to you in the audience if you are here today and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, he has offered the atoning sacrifice which is available for sinners. I do not know who the elect are. No one knows who the elect are. We are told by the grace of God to preach the gospel to all. All are sinners. The saving work of Christ is for sinners. If God, the Holy Spirit, has brought you to the knowledge of your sin, then the death of Christ is there for you and for your redemption. We call you to it.

If you sit in the pews of this church and say, I don't know whether I am elect or not or I don't like the doctrine of election, I won't come, you have no excuse. You get exactly what you deserve. But if, by the grace of God, you have been brought to conviction of your sin, the saving work of the Lord Jesus is available for you and as you come to Him and receive the free gift of everlasting life, you will know what it is to be saved, to have the forgiveness of sins, to become a priest of God, to be justified, declared righteous. You'll also have the conviction that you have been from ages past, one of God's elect individuals. May you come to Christ. Put your trust in Him. Don't leave this auditorium without the sense of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins through the blood that was shed. Come to Christ. I appeal to you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee for these wonderful truths. How wonderful and how great it is to know that there has come a redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has offered the sacrifice for sins that saves! And we pray O Father that if there are some in this audience who have never believed in him, O give them no rest nor peace. Cause them to know the terror of their lost condition and may they flee by the grace of God, the Spirit, to the foot of the cross to receive the free gift of everlasting life.

O Father, work mightily in the hearts of the lost who are here and among the saved, build us up in our faith. We thank Thee for a sovereign master to whom we are totally indebted. We worship Thee and we praise Thee. [We] glorify Thy name.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.