



The Blessing of the Faithful Provider

The Story of Scripture – Part 20

I am so excited, thankful and humbled to be here with you this morning. I love your pastor. We served together at the International Mission Board and became good friends. I can tell you that David is a man of integrity. He loves the Lord and the nations. I'm now a pastor in Tampa. Recently he told me, "Brother, we're going to the Dominican Republic and I would love for you to come to McLean and share the Word of God with us."

I'm thankful to be here with you, but also overwhelmed with joy. Northern Virginia is very special to me and my family. I was born and raised in the Dominican Republic, but the Lord saved me here in Washington, DC—in Arlington actually. I was raised in a non-Christian home and went to a Roman Catholic school my whole life. My family is in business, so when I was around 12 I started working with them. When I was 14 I started my first business selling sugar and rice, riding a motorcycle in my small town in the northeast part of the country. That is legal outside the United States.

Through that I got involved with different ministries and non-profits, then eventually became very interested in politics. I realized we were doing all the work, but the politicians made all the decisions. So in order to change society, I needed to be involved with politics. That was my logic at age 15. My mother and grandmother said, "No way. We're business people; we're not engaged in politics. That's dangerous—you can get killed." That's true outside the U.S. It's very tough.

Nonetheless, when I turned 17, I moved to Santo Domingo—where Pastor David and the rest of the team are serving today—to attend the university. I studied business and when I turned 18 I joined a political party against the wishes of my family. I began to work for an international bank in Santo Domingo, finishing my undergraduate and graduate schooling in the evenings. I got very involved in politics and campaigning. I was elected vice president of the National Party for the Youth, campaigning around the country and giving speeches.

In 2004, the president of my party was elected president of the country. When he was elected, they offered me a position to join the government. I told them no, that I was already the manager of the bank and I didn't want to join the government. But then I went back to them and said, "You know what? I will only take a position in Washington, DC." The reason for that, to be honest with you, was I had a lot of ambitions. I had a plan over the next 20 years to be elected to different offices. I realized Washington

was very influential in the Dominican Republic and the rest of Latin America, because the U.S. embassy shapes the political process and might help me get elected.

Because I have a background in finance and economics, they appointed me to the embassy as part of a team that was to be negotiating a free trade agreement. When I came to Arlington, I didn't speak English, so I studied English for six months, then I joined the staff at the embassy. In Washington, a friend of mine gave me a biography about Joseph, the son of Jacob, as told in the last part of Genesis. As a non-Christian in politics, I was captivated by Joseph. He was sold into slavery by his brothers, he was in prison, then he became prime minister of Egypt. I thought that was amazing.

I did not know they had stories like that in the Bible. I decided to read the Bible to find more stories like that so I could use them in politics. That was my motivation. I began to read the Scriptures—the Old Testament in the morning and the New Testament in the evenings. I read them by myself at home. After weeks and months of reading the Bible, I was shaken, confused and troubled. I felt the weight of the Scriptures. I remember thinking I needed to talk to someone who could help answer my questions.

So I spoke with a cousin of mine and through that I was exposed to the preaching of two pastors. Through their preaching and my reading of the Bible, God gave me conviction of sin and I put my faith in Christ. When that happened, I said, "I need to find a church." Through the church I attended in Arlington I met my wife, who is also from the Dominican Republic and who was studying law at Georgetown. While we were dating, I returned to the Dominican Republic to join the presidential company and she returned when she was done at Georgetown.

So then I had to figure out how to be a Christian in politics. As I struggled with that, I was about to run for office in congress when I was asked to come back to Washington, DC, to work on an agenda at the embassy with the Department of State, the Department of Defense and Congress. I told them I couldn't, because I was running for office, but they said, "We need you here." I was 26 and thus I was too young to come from the establishment, so I decided to come back for the sake of the long term. That was my plan—but God was working through it.

I came back to my church in DC and God used the minister at that church to change my life forever. God had changed my life once when He saved me, but this time He changed my life by calling me into the ministry. As I was meeting people, I was amazed at their passion for the gospel. They talked about Jesus all the time, sharing the gospel. I thought, "I'm not doing that." But as I prayed, God gave me a passion for those who do not know Jesus.

I started doing evangelistic Bible studies in DC with embassies, people from the bank and IMF. As I was meeting with friends and sharing the gospel with them, I found myself in a huge dilemma. One night I went home and said to my wife, "Sara, I don't think I can be part of this anymore." She asked,

“What’s going on?” I said, “I’m meeting with all these friends, I share the gospel with them, then we talk politics. Most of the things I say about politics are not true and they know it. I feel like I’m jeopardizing the testimony of the gospel.” So as we prayed, I told her, “I think God is calling me into the ministry.” Through that process and talking with the pastor at my church, I decided to go to seminary.

I am humbled now for the first time to be back in northern Virginia and preaching, after I moved away in 2010. God used this city to change my life. I came chasing a political dream, but God saved me from my sin and through that called me to ministry. I pray that God will use some of you here to share the gospel with people who are coming from the nations with a specific dream, that they will know Jesus and in Him they will be satisfied and saved.

If you have your Bible—and I hope you do —please open your Bible to Genesis 22. This week I was talking with your pastor and he mentioned that last week he preached on Ezekiel 36-37 and the week before on Jeremiah 31. Those are the passages of the new covenant. He explained to me that you are going through the Story of the Scripture. You have a reading plan. If you’re new here, you can get one of those outside and can track with the church as they read the Scriptures together every week.

He said, “It would be helpful to go back and explain the covenant, especially the Abrahamic covenant, so we can connect that with what we’ve been doing the last couple weeks.” That’s what I will be doing today in Genesis 22. But let me ask you a question first. As a Christian, are you blessed? You know, feeling blessed and talking about it is cool today. People laugh when you talk about being blessed. In fact, if you look at Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, you will see hundreds of friends using #blessed.

I think talking about it is a way to sound humble while you boast. Family vacation—blessed. New promotion—blessed. New vehicle—blessed. New scholarship—blessed. We talk about being blessed and being a blessing, but is that the way the Bible speaks about being blessed? I think this passage will help us answer that. Let’s read Genesis 22:1-18:

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² 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 on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, 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. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” 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. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy 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.” ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Let’s pray one more time.

Heavenly Father, we are thankful that sinners like us can come before a holy, infinite, perfect God, knowing that You listen to us because we come in the name of Christ. Father, I ask You that Your Holy Spirit will guide us this morning, that You will teach us Your Word, that You will help us be more like Christ even now. I ask You that I will be faithful to You, that the body here will be edified and that Your name will be glorified. In Christ we pray. Amen.

This is a very controversial passage. Many people, Christians and non-Christians, struggle with this passage. For example, Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher of the Enlightenment, called this passage repugnant. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard called this passage irrational. A lot of people struggle with it. I think the reason most of us struggle with this passage is because we do not get what the passage is teaching us, because we don’t understand the beauty and richness of the mercy of God here.

This morning, I hope to unpack what this passage is teaching us about God and ourselves, how this passage connects with what we saw last week and how it connects with the rest of the Bible. This is the last divine address to Abraham. He was called by God in Genesis 12, in what we call the Abrahamic Covenant—the covenant God made with Abraham. He called Abraham in Genesis 12, He made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 and He confirmed that covenant in Genesis 17.

Here we see the climactic moment of that cycle, that story. In fact, the command here—to go—evokes the command God gave Abraham. In Genesis 12 He said, “Go from the land of your family, Mesopotamia, to the land I will show you. Leave everything—your wealth, your family, your friends,

your possessions—and go to the place I will show you. I will make your name great and will bless you. Through you the nations of the earth will be blessed.” That was in Genesis 12.

Here now God is calling Abraham to go to a different land, to the land of Moriah. In Genesis 12 he’s going to an unknown land; here, he’s going to a very dark place, where his son will be sacrificed. So for those of you who take notes, I would like to unpack this passage verse by verse. But for the rest of you, I have one simple message: In Christ, if you are a Christian, you have been blessed in the Son to be a blessing to the nations. I will show you that in two parts: “Blessed in the Son” (verses 1-14) and then “The Blessing to the Nations” (verses 15-18).

Blessed in the Son – Genesis 22:1-14

Look first at Genesis 12:2. *“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 on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”* Take your son, your only son, whom you love. The emotions here are high. I don’t know what’s going on in Abraham’s mind when he heard the words: “Take your son.” You see how God emphasizes “your son, your only son, whom you love.”

If you’re familiar with the story of the Bible, you might wonder at this, because Abraham had another child, Ishmael. You can read that in the previous chapters. He will then have six more children in Genesis 25. But you wonder why God said, “Your only son.” Is the author, who is Moses, forgetting that Abraham had another son? No. It is because He’s talking about the son of the promise. It is through this son that God promised He will bless the nations.

If you go back to Genesis 17:7-9, you see that God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, *“And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.. .And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land.”* And at the end He said, *“I will be their God...”* That’s what the Scripture calls covenant language: I will be their God and they will be My people. You saw that last week in Ezekiel and the previous week in Jeremiah 31. “I will be their God and they will be My people.”

Then also in Genesis 17:19, God said, *“No,”* in reference to Ishmael, *“but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.”* Then in verse 21 He says, *“I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall birth to you at this time next year.”* That made it very clear that it is through that son, Isaac, that He will bless the nations. So the covenant God is making with Abraham will be a covenant He’s also making with the children of Abraham. And it’s the children of Abraham that will come through Isaac.

Now God is asking Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. Paul understands that. In Galatians 3:16, Paul says, “*Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.*” So Paul looks back to this and says, “The promise that was given to Abraham and his offspring is one and that One is Jesus.” Do you follow that? He’s talking about this special promise—this special Son.

Look now again at Genesis 22:2. Then God told Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice, where? In the land of Moriah. The land of Moriah, according to 2 Chronicles 3:1, is where Solomon built the temple. Where God is asking him to sacrifice his son is where the temple of the Lord will be built, where sacrifices will be offered and where God will have communion with His people.

The Holy of Holies was where the presence of the Lord came and only the high priest could go in as a mediator between God and the people. He would mediate the sins of the people or the requests of the people before the Lord. It was that place where God asked Abraham to offer his son. In the previous call in Genesis 12, God called him to go to a land that he would not know. Now He’s calling him to a mountain in which his son will die and the death of the boy would represent the death of the father.

In Genesis 22:3-5, we see that Abraham told his servants that he and his son would go up to the mountain to worship. He said, “Then we will come back to you.” He’s telling his servants, “My son Isaac and I will go to the mountain, we will worship, then we will come back to you.” What’s going on here? He knows that God asked him to offer him as a burnt offering, but he’s telling his servants that they will go to worship, then both of them will come back together. Why is Abraham saying that when he knew what God was asking him?

Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us why. It says he who had received the promises knew that it was through Isaac that all the nations would be blessed. Because Abraham knew this, he believed even if he killed Isaac as a sacrifice, God would raise him from the dead; because God is faithful, even if Isaac died, God would bring him back to life. That’s why he could tell the servants, “We will go to worship, then we will come back to you.” Abraham believed the word of God, even when the death of his son was immanent.

Genesis 22:6, “*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.*” Here we see both the offeror and the offering going together. Abraham is the one who is offering the sacrifice which is his son. Both of them walk together. We see a picture of that in Hebrews 7:27 where the author of Hebrews said, “[Jesus] did this once for all when he offered up himself.” We see Christ being the offeror and the offering. Who is presenting the sacrifice? The High Priest—the Lord Jesus. And what is the sacrifice? Christ Himself.

Here in Genesis we see a picture of something that will happen centuries later. Picture Isaac walking up to the mountain with the wood on his back. He reminds us of Jesus, walking up to the mountain with wood on His back. In Genesis 22:7, it gets quite interesting. Isaac asks, “Where is the lamb?” He sees the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham responds in verse eight, “*God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.*” God Himself will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering.

Then in verses 11-12 we see the angel of the Lord calling from heaven, saying, “*Abraham! Abraham!...Do not lay your hand on the boy 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.*” This language is the very language Paul uses in Romans 8:32 when he said, “*He...did not spare his Son, but gave him up for us all.*” Paul was going back to this language to say, “Isaac did not die, but Jesus did die.”

In Genesis 22:13, Abraham looked up and saw a ram as a burnt offering in place of his son. The ram was given as a substitute. Instead of Isaac dying, the ram would die in his place. Thus, Abraham says in verse 14, “*On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.*” Blessings and courage come together. At the climactic moment here on the mountain, God becomes the Provider again. God provides a sacrifice. He has shown Abraham the ram and now He has provided a substitute. He has blessed him from Jerusalem twice.

Notice something important here. Our narrative is way more than just Abraham being found faithful. This is also God being found faithful, because God was the One Who promised that through this son, the nations will be blessed. Now God is showing through Abraham that He’s faithful to His promises and He provides a substitute.

Yet when we look at all this, we’re still missing a key point. Look at verse seven. Isaac says, “My father, where is the lamb?” In verse eight, Abraham responds, “My son, God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.” In verse 13, God provides a ram. Is that a typo in the Scripture? No. Something great is going on here.

To understand this, we need to go back to Genesis 15. Isaac was expecting a lamb. Abraham was expecting a lamb. But the lamb was not provided. Genesis 15 is where God made a covenant with Abraham. Verse one: “*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.’ But Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’*”

God was telling Abraham, “I will bless you. Your reward will be great.” Abraham said, “O Lord God, I don’t have any children. How can I have a blessing?” God said to Abraham, “Come outside your tent. Look to the heavens and count the stars, if you can. You will have that many children.”

One side note here: if you're a Christian, when Abraham was counting the stars, he was counting you.

Then verse six says, *"And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."* Paul actually quotes this very verse in Romans 4, when he's having a discussion with the Jewish leaders. The leaders were arguing that we're saved by works, by circumcision. He said, "Guys, you're not reading your Bible well. If you read Genesis, you'll understand that Abraham was justified by faith." Circumcision wasn't introduced until Genesis 17, yet Abraham was justified in Genesis 15. How? By faith. So Abraham and the saints in the Old Testament were saved the same way we are saved today—by faith.

Keep going. In Genesis 15:9, the Lord said to Abraham, *"Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."* Abraham brought all these, cut them in half and laid them over against each other. That was normal in the ancient Near Eastern culture. People would make a covenant, or nations would make covenants. In this case it was God making a covenant with Abraham. God initiated the covenant with Abraham, saying, "Bring these animals." God used what Abraham knew to teach him what he did not know.

God does this all the time in the Old Testament. He uses something we know to teach us what we don't know. God used a well-known practice when He said, "Bring those animals and cut them into two pieces." You can read about this in Jeremiah 34:18 where the meaning is explained. Basically two parties make an agreement—a covenant—by taking the animals and cutting them in two pieces. They put one piece in front of the other and the blood run together from the two pieces.

Then the people would walk between the animals, basically saying, "If you break this covenant, what will happen to you is what happened to these animals. If I break the covenant, what will happen to me is what happened to these animals." But then we see in Genesis 15:12 that *"a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him."* Abraham was tired, a deep sleep fell on him, then in verse 17 we read, *"When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces."*

What's going on here? If you're familiar with the Old Testament, smoke, clouds and fire represented the presence of God. In the exodus, when God took them out of Egypt, He went with them through the night with a pillar of fire, protecting them from the cold, and in the day with a cloud, protecting them from the heat of the sun. In 1 Kings 8, when Solomon built the temple, a big cloud came into the temple and the glory of God came to the temple to a place where the priests could not go. That was normal in the Old Testament.

What is being communicated in Genesis 15:17 is that God was walking between the animal pieces, but Abraham was asleep, so he didn't pass between them. Essentially what God was

communicating was this: “Abraham, if I break the covenant, I will die. If you break the covenant, I will die.” The Lord knew Abraham would break the covenant. God was basically declaring death upon Himself. That is why the lamb was not sacrificed.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.” What we have on the cross is God in the flesh dying for sinners like you and me. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, Who became like us to make us like Him. The Bible teaches that God created the heavens and the earth. If you go back to Genesis 1, the first chapter in the Bible, you will read, “And it was good... And it was good... And it was good...” We read that in verses two, eight, ten, 12, 18 and 21. God created this and it was good. He created the heavens and the earth and it was good. He separated the waters from the land and it was good. Everything was good.

Normally, that repetition is making the point that something good is going on here. But then in Genesis 1:31, when He gets to the creation of the man and the woman, it says, “It was very good.” Everything was good, but the human beings created in His image were very good. We are the climax of creation. We are created in His image. And everything was in perfect communion with God.

But we know in Genesis 3 that our first parents rebelled against God. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and obeyed the serpent. They rebelled against God and died—both spiritually and physically. That’s the point made in Genesis 5. There was this person, then he died. There was this one, then he died. He lived this many years, then he died. That which was good, good, good became death, death, death, because sin came into the world. The Bible teaches that the wages of sin is death, that God is just and He will not leave the guilty unpunished.

The Bible also teaches that God is good and merciful. So He came in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, His only beloved Son, to live the life you and I should have lived. He went to the cross to receive the death we deserve. God the Father then raised Him from the dead, declaring victory over death. Death is universal; you know that. We have people here from many nations; death is universal. Regardless of your social or ethnic background, death reigns over all humanity.

The only One Who is life in Himself became like us to die as one of us. Through His death, He defeated death and the one who had the power of death. In Him we are blessed. Isaac did not die—Jesus actually died. If you’re here and you’re not a Christian, if you do not know Christ as Lord and Savior, I ask you—I beg you—to repent of your sin and put your faith in Christ. In Him you will be made new. He will make you a new creation. He is the First Fruit of a new creation. I ask you, come to Jesus. He will not reject you; He will receive you and He will give Himself to you.

It’s not only Isaac who points us to Jesus; it’s also Abraham. As I mentioned, in Christ we have both the offerer and the offering. He’s the Priest and He’s also the Sacrifice. That’s why the author of Hebrews says He did this once for all when He offered up Himself. The way I like to summarize the

whole cross of Christ in one sentence is this: At the cross, God gave Himself to Himself to save us from Himself. Who's presenting the sacrifice? God the Son. What is the sacrifice? Jesus Himself. And He's presenting that sacrifice to God the Father. He's both our Sacrifice and our High Priest. He did it once for all when He offered up Himself. He mediates for us which is why we don't need more sacrifices today.

I was reading a few months ago about a man in Ecuador who on Easter was walking on his knees a few miles on the street to punish himself. He was putting something in his back, some sort of poison, to inflict pain in his back. When the reporter asked him, "Why are you doing that?" he said, "I'm doing that for my sin and the sins of my children." None of us can atone for our sins, much less for the sins of those we love. But God, the perfect, infinite One, provided a perfect sacrifice when He gave His Son for you and me. That is why it was once for all. "In Him" is sufficient. It is finished.

The Christ we proclaim is Jesus—Emmanuel, God with us—which is important for us to understand, because sometimes we miss the point. We talk about Jesus as my Buddy, my Friend. It's true that Hebrews speaks about Him being a Friend, but He's way more than that. He's the Creator of the universe. Just so you can have an idea, when He was in Mary's womb, He was still holding the universe in His hands. When Mary was holding Him as a baby, Christ was holding her. He became like us, but He never ceased to be Who He has been for all eternity.

The One we proclaim saves sinners. He saved us and He's saving people today across the nations. It's knowing that Christ, meditating on Him, that will keep in you a powerful passion for spreading the gospel among all the nations. You need to know about Jesus and while you know Him, you need to make Him known. The glory of God revealed in Christ engenders fear and encourages passion.

But sometimes I think we confuse the message of the gospel and the Great Commission with a type of religious proselytism. When we go to tell people, we say, "If you want to go to heaven, come and trust in Jesus." But that's not how the Bible speaks. Then to the friend who said, "Yes, I will trust in Jesus," you'll say, "By the way, you have to be holy." He will then say, "You never mentioned that." So when we say that, we need to understand why we are saying it.

I remember going to Mexico a few years ago with a group of students on a mission trip. One of them came to me and said, "Hey, I met three guys in the street and they just accepted Jesus as Lord." I said, "Praise God. Let's talk them into connecting with a local church." Then as I was talking with them, I learned that in their worldview, for them to accept Jesus was that He was another god added into their pantheon of gods.

But that's not what the Bible teaches and that's not what we mean when we say, "Jesus is Lord." He is the only Lord. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord of lords and the King of kings. When you come to Him, do you know what you get? Jesus. We don't say, "Come and you can go to heaven." Paul

doesn't speak that way. He said, "I want to die to be with Jesus." Why? Heaven is heaven because Jesus is there. Heaven is good because Jesus is there.

When you come to Jesus, He gives Himself to you. He gives Himself to you in all His attributes—in His meekness, power, majesty, sweetness, kindness, love, holiness. He will never let you go. He will always hold you dear and He will always hold you fast. Even when you feel you are weak, even you feel you're struggling, if you come to Him, He will be there for you.

That's important for us to understand, because sometimes, as we struggle with anxiety and depression, as sometimes we feel like our faith is weak, do you know what? It's not our faith that saves us—it's the Object of our faith. It is Christ when we put our faith in Him. We pray like the man who said, "Lord, I believe—help my unbelief." The Object of our faith is what saves us, what makes us one—and that is Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham. That is the blessed Son in Whom we are blessed.

The Blessing to the Nations – Genesis 22:15-18

Now look at Genesis 22:15-18, the blessings of the nations. As I mentioned, when we talk about being blessed—about health, jobs, money—that's not how the Bible speaks about blessed. In fact, Moses called Israel blessed. In Deuteronomy 33 he said, "Blessed are you, O Israel, like no one known and saved by the Lord." Blessed in the Bible is when we're receiving the grace of God, the undeserved favor of God. We receive that in Christ.

That is why God promised Abraham in Genesis 12, "I will bless you and in you the nations of the earth will be blessed." The Great Commission that you read here every Sunday is the fulfillment of these promises. God said to Abraham, "I will bless you and through your child the nations of the earth will be blessed. In fact, in Galatians 3:7-9, Paul says, "It is through that offspring, Jesus Christ, in Whom the nations are blessed." We see this throughout the Old Testament, pointing back to these promises.

This week, for example, you read Daniel 9:4 where Daniel said, "O Lord, You are good and faithful to keep Your covenant." He's pointing back to the promise God made to Abraham which has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Go back to Genesis 1 when God told the man and women to multiply themselves—today we call that the cultural mandate. We normally think about that as changing society and having a lot of children. I don't think that's what the point of that is. It's basically telling them to reproduce themselves and populate the earth to fill the earth with worshipers.

After the fall, we don't fill the earth just by having a lot of children. We fill the earth by people repenting of their sin and coming to Christ. In Him they are blessed, so in Him they worship the true and only God. That is what was given to us and that is the reason the Lord has blessed us. He has blessed us so we will love Him and love others. But the truth, brothers and sisters, is that many times we fail to do that.

As I mentioned, I grew up in the Dominican Republic, in a small town in the northeast. When I was growing up, my dream as a young boy was to be a major league baseball player. I would run every morning when I was 12 or 13. I had a baseball coach who would work with me. He said, “Edgar, you are weak. You need some muscles. You need to go to the gym.” So he sent me to the gym. But just to give you an idea, the gyms we had there are not like the ones we have here today. They basically were made of cement and we made them ourselves.

I remember the first time I went to the back of a house. I put 20 pounds on 20 pounds and I was struggling on the bench with 40 pounds. I could not do it. But this guy we called Ludo was like 6’3” or 6’4”. He would put 30, 30, 30, 30, 30, 30 like nothing. He got up to almost 300 pounds. He acted like it was nothing. I thought, “Who’s this guy? His arms were bigger than my legs.” I thought, “This guy must be a vigilante, fighting criminals, defending children.”

Well, I learned, after I got to know him, that he was a paralegal. He was basically working at a law firm, typing on a computer every morning. I said, “Why on earth do you need all those muscles?” Well, I think as Christians, we can be like that. We receive the love of God, then we do nothing. Unlike Ludo, we just walk around, look at ourselves in the mirror and measure how big our arms are.

God did not love you so that you would feel good about yourself. He loved you so you would love Him, then in loving Him, you will love others. That’s the reason we proclaim the gospel—even when it’s difficult to do. That’s the reason, college students and high school students, you share the gospel with your non-Christian friends, even when you feel like you’ll be awkward. It’s because Jesus is worthy and because you love them enough to tell them about Jesus.

That’s the reason a friend of mine who was serving with the army during two tours in Afghanistan went back to Afghanistan with his family to make disciples when he retired. That’s the reason a friend of mine who was an accountant with Price Waterhouse Cooper took a transfer to a big city in Asia to make disciples. Because Christ is worthy and loves us, we want others to know Him, enjoy Him, be delighted in Him and be glad in Him.

Many people come to this city and I think you’re positioned in such amazing ways to make disciples from all the nations. I remember being invited to a reception at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, DC. You know that as Christians we cannot send missionaries to Saudi Arabia, but the nations are coming here. Maybe God has called some of you here to be saved, to send you back to make disciples in places where there is no witness. Maybe He’s asking you to share the gospel with those friends who do not know Jesus.

The whole point of the Bible is to advance the glory of God among the nations. But the only way the nations can worship Him enjoy Him and be reconciled with Him is through Christ His Son. That’s why we go and proclaim His Son, the One Who, unlike Isaac, died. But Jesus came back from the dead

and declared victory. In Him, we are made new. Brothers and sisters, I encourage you to consider that, to think about that. How can you be faithful to make disciples of all nations here and abroad?

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we worship You. We love You. We are thankful that You, in Your Son, gave Yourself for us to rescue us and make us like Jesus. Father, I ask that You will call men and women from McLean Bible Church to make disciples here among the nations and also overseas among the nations. Father, thank You that You love us in Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

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