

Sonoraville Baptist Church

Sunday, January 31, 2010 – 11:00 AM

Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

God Will Provide - Genesis 22:6-14

Introduction: Have you ever played the trust game? The trust game involves having someone stand in front of you with their backs to you, arms folded and eyes closed, and you have them fall backwards. The trust factor is that they trust you to catch them. (I did this during our Children's Feature this morning. It worked!)

We can learn a lot about faith from children playing the trust game, because children are usually very trusting.

We can also learn about trust from our heavenly Father. God is so good to us. He's always faithful. There are many Scriptures that attest to the absolute trustworthiness of God. For example, **Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)** says about God, "...*His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness.*" And in **Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)** the Lord assures us of His faithfulness when He says, "*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*" So we can put our confidence in the Lord that He will not let us fall.

I have no doubt that God has a wonderful future for us. The reason I say that is because this church was founded on a solid foundation of faith. It was so solid that it has been able to survive and even thrive in spite of some unstable times in the past. In

fact, the tough times this church has endured has only served to make it stronger. That could not have happened unless your faith was strong and God's promises were sure.

With such a solid foundation on which to build, and a strong framework of hard-working, dedicated people as you are keeping the ministry alive, there is every reason to believe that the sky is the limit as far as Sonoraville's future is concerned. There is a tremendous potential here because we are trusting on the tremendous promises and faithfulness of God.

This morning, I want us to look at a do-or-die moment in Abraham's life and learn how we can have faith for our future.

Abraham was the father of Israel. The Apostle Paul called him "*the father of us all... who are of the faith...*" (**Rom.4:16 NIV**). Abraham first heard God's call at age of 75 when he left his home and followed God's call to go to a land that God would show him. Later, he believed God's promise that he would be the father of a great nation. And when his first son, Isaac was born, the writer of Hebrews said that Abraham was "*as good as dead*" (**Hebrews 11:12 NIV**).

Well, the boy grew and is now probably a teenager. That's when we read in **Genesis 22:1-2 (NIV)** that God came to Abraham to test his faith. "...*He said to him, 'Abraham...Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.'*"

Read Genesis 22:6-14.

How could Abraham have the faith to be willing to obey God to the point of even sacrificing his own son? I believe it was because Abraham had already experienced God so convincingly, he believed God and trusted in God even more than he trusted his own logic or his own emotions. He believed God more than anything! God had not let him down – ever! God had always been true to His word, so why would this situation be any different? Somehow, Abraham just knew that *"God Himself would provide the lamb..."* And the word that God has for us today is that Abraham's obedience and his faith in God's provision, is a beautiful picture of how God the Father offered His *"only begotten Son"* (**John 3:16 KJV**) for the sins of the world.

The very essence of faith is not being afraid to have an unshakable trust in the provision of God. We can learn from Abraham's example that as believers, as families, and even as a church, we can absolutely trust God to meet our needs. Today, I want us to learn three lessons about God's provision. First:

1. God Provides All our Needs.

A. God's People have Always had Needs. Abraham needed a sacrifice. Isaac, needed a wife. Jacob needed food. The Children of Israel needed a way of escape. Joshua needed a victory. Samson needed strength. Solomon needed wisdom. Nehemiah needed workers. Daniel needed protection. Peter needed faith. Saul needed a blinding light. We need a Savior.

We have other needs as well. Some need money for the next rent or mortgage payment. Some need a job, a spouse, a girlfriend

or boyfriend, comfort in a time of grief, peace in uncertainty, healing. Some of you look like you need some sleep!

We tend to think that our generation has more needs than any other. But I like the words of Paul Harvey who said, *"In times like these it is always helpful to remember that there have always been times like these."*

Our church has needs too. We have maintenance needs on our buildings. We have budget needs. We have personnel needs in the Children's Ministry and in Sunday School. We have mission needs. Did you know that many of the missions we pledged to support last year, haven't received anything from us in a while? We have evangelism needs. Did you know that this baptistry has been idle for almost 4 months now? That's a shame! We ought to be on our knees praying for lost souls. But more than that, we need to be on our feet reaching the lost with the love of Christ. So we have church needs. You need to know that and you need to be concerned about that. But something else you need to know:

B. God is Aware of our Needs. None of our needs surprise God. He is not wringing His hands worrying about how He's going to meet our needs. He's not reaching for the medicine cabinet looking for a xanax to help Him overcome His anxiety about our needs. On the contrary, God is absolutely and unequivocally in control.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:26 (NIV)**, *"Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable*

than they?"

If God watches over nature and takes care of the needs of the tiniest of His creation with such foresight and such compassion, we can rest assured that He's keenly aware of the needs of the crown of His creation.

God knows you need all that stuff. He knows our needs as a church as well. But not only is God aware of our needs:

C. God is Faithful to Provide our Needs. Think back on your life since you have been saved. Has there ever been a need God has not met? Has there ever been a time when He was unfaithful? No! Well, guess what? He hasn't changed. If He was faithful then, He's faithful now.

When Abraham first heard the Word of God telling him to go up to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice his own son, it had to be a shock. I mean, he knew that his son was the evidence of God's promise made to him many years earlier. God had told Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. And for many years, Abraham and Sarah were not able to have children. Then, miraculously, when he was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, Sarah conceived and Isaac was born.

And now, God was telling him to offer his son as a sacrifice? In Abraham's human mind, it didn't make sense. *"Surely I heard wrong!"* he must have thought. It sounded so bazaar and unlike the God he knew.

One thing we have to understand here is this: We don't really know God like we think we do. Now we believe and teach that

God is a personal God who can be known. But what we mean is that a God we can have a relationship with.

We also believe and teach that there are certain attributes about God that we can know: He is self-existent; He is immutable; He is Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient; and He is Eternal. We know He is holy and righteous and embodies truth and love. We can know those things about God, yet in **Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)** God tells us, *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

In our finite minds, we can't put ourselves in the mind of God. To do that, we would become God, and contrary to what some cults believe, that will never happen. There is but one true God who is *"the supreme personal Spirit; perfect in all His attributes; who is the source, support, and end of the universe..."* *"He directs the affairs of men and nations toward the fulfillment of His redemptive purpose."* (Herschel Hobbs: Baptist Faith and Message 1971, Convention Press, ppg. 31, 35).

Abraham thought he knew God, but God was about to reveal to him a higher thought and a higher way. And Abraham must have had some idea of the sovereignty of God because eventually, he was able to dismiss his doubts and reconcile in his mind that God knew what He was doing.

Perhaps he recalled God's faithful provision of giving him land to build a life on when he had no land. Perhaps he ultimately came to rely on the fact that God had kept His promise by giving

him a son when it seemed impossible for his wife to bear children. Apparently Abraham remembered these things and that's why Paul could write in **Romans 4:3 (NIV)**, "*Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*"

You see, stories like this one about faith and supernatural provision are not just children's Sunday School lessons. They are real-life examples of the incredible power and provision of God. And the same God who provided for Abraham's needs thousands of years ago is the same God today. He hasn't changed. He hasn't forgotten how to work. If he can provide a ram in the bush for a faithful and righteous father, He can provide a check in the mailbox for a faithful and righteous family. What I'm trying to tell you this morning is that He who was faithful in the past can and will supply your needs today.

Philippians 4:19 (NIV) says, "*And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*" Our faithful Father stands ready, willing and able to open the storehouse of His riches to meet our needs! Are we trusting Him? Next, I want us to see how God provides our needs:

2. God Provides Through our Obedience.

A. God Tests our Faith. The Old Testament teaches that God will test the faith of those who say they trust Him. In our text, **Genesis 22:1** says, "*Some time later God tested Abraham...*" **Psalms 11:5 (NASB)** says, "*The LORD tests the righteous...*" Job said, "*When He has tested me, I will come forth as gold*" (**Job 23:10 NIV**). So, if you're a believer, just know that God will test

your faith. Now, He doesn't test us so He can know how strong our faith is, He tests us so that WE will know.

You see, as I said earlier, God is omniscient. He knows how we will respond before the test begins, just as He knew how Abraham would respond. But Abraham didn't know, so God tested him. It's like I was demonstrating with the children earlier in the trust game; I knew I was going to catch the boy, but he didn't. So I tested his faith in me to catch him

Now apply that to your situation. How is God testing your faith? How is He testing the faith of our church? Secondly, we need to know that:

B. We Pass God's Test through Obedience. What God was looking for in this test of Abraham, is the same thing He's looking for when He tests us. He's looking for the faith to obey.

God's test for you may be the obedience of being a faithful witness to a lost co-worker or family member. It may be the test of obedience in giving up a bad habit that is having a negative effect on your witness. It may be a test of obedience in filling some position or getting involved in some ministry of the church. It may be the test of obedience in trusting Him to provide as you invest your income in tithes and offerings.

We pass the test when we are obedient. And as a church, we pass the test when we walk together in obedience. That is why unity in the church is so important. **Psalms 133:1 (NASB)** says, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!*" It's exciting to see a church coming together

after a test of faith, because that means new doors will be open and people will be drawn to God and saved and discipled. The more we trust God, and obey God, the greater the blessing and provision of God!

The sign of genuine faith is trusting in the provision of God. The following *"tongue-in cheek"* article appeared in a Sumter County FL. newspaper once: *"American Family Publishers found God in Sumter County, and he may be very, very rich. A sweepstakes noticed arrived at the Bushnell Assembly of God earlier this month announcing that God was a finalist for the \$11 million top prize. The letter said, 'God, we've been searching for you.' It requested God to 'come forward' and said, 'What an incredible fortune there would be for you God! Imagine the look you'll get from your neighbors, but don't just sit there God.'"*

Well, God is rich, but He didn't get that way because He won a sweepstakes prize. He has everything we need in abundance and is faithful to give us what we need in abundance.

He can provide you with **Abundant Joy. Psalms 36:8 (NIV)** says, *"They feast on the abundance of your house."*

He can provide you with an **Abundant Life.** Jesus said in **John 10:10 (KJV)**, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

He can provide you with **Abundant Grace. 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV)** says, *"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

He can provide you with **Abundant Power. Ephesians 3:20 NASB)** says, *"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."*

He even will provide you with an **Abundant Entrance** to heaven. **2 Peter 1:11 (NASB)** says, *"for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."*

I don't know what you need, but I know one who can meet your need and come to your rescue **in abundance!** I know the one who owns the cattle of a thousand hills; whose name is above every name, and with whom nothing is impossible. And if you'll just be obedient to Him, He'll meet your need **in abundance!** One more thing we need to know about God's provision:

3. God Provides at Just the Right Time.

A. Our Timing is not Always God's Timing. When Abraham told his son that *"God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering"* (8), he was trusting that God would provide the sacrifice in His time. Of course we know that this statement pointed beyond his Son Isaac to the Son of God who would become the *"Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* But you get the point - he trusted in God's timing.

Are you trusting in God's timing? So often we are anxious for God to act now! Have you ever prayed, *"God give me patience and give it to me NOW!!!?"*

Well, that seemed to be the experience of one young

preacher. When he felt God's call upon his life to preach, he was so impatient and wanted to be a pastor from day one. His youth minister felt that he really had the wrong motivation for wanting to preach, but he was young, and he knew that God could work on him. So he kept telling him that he needed to wait and get his education, and get some experience under his belt first. Well, he did enroll in college, but no sooner than he got there, he started putting his resume out to anyone who would take it. And before long, sure enough, a little church called him to be their pastor.

Well, about 3 months later, he got fired for doing something youthfully foolish. His experience is an example of not waiting on the Lord's timing. We need to understand this about God's timing:

B. God's Timing is Perfect. After Abraham built the altar and laid his son on it, he raised the knife to plunge it into his son's heart. But at just the perfect time, *"the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven."* And said, *"Do not lay a hand on the boy."* **Genesis 22:11-12 (NIV).**

God wasn't early. He didn't stop him when they got to the top of the mountain. He wasn't late. He didn't call after the boy was dead. As always, He's an on-time God!

God's timing in our lives is perfect too. He sends a friend with the just the right word at just the right time. He sends a check for just the right amount at just the right time.

I received a confirmation of God's impeccable timing just this week. For weeks, I had been praying about whom to ask

about preaching our upcoming revival. God laid a man on my heart, so last October, I was at a conference where he was speaking, and I asked him. He told me then that it probably wouldn't work out because his schedule was so busy.

Well, I called him again just a couple of weeks ago, and again, he told me he was booked for that date, but if there was a cancellation, he'd let me know. Well, on Wednesday afternoon, as I was preparing this message, this man called me. He said, *"Steve, I told you I'd call you if I got a cancellation, and that's what happened. I am free to preach your revival if you still want me."* I about jumped out of my chair! I told him that I had just got to this part of preparing this message, and then he got excited! You see, God knows what He's doing. We think we do, but most of the time we're too impatient and impulsive, and so we settle for second best a lot of the time. But God timing is perfect and impeccable! And if we call ourselves people of faith, then we need to pray first, then wait for and trust in God's timing to answer.

That is what Paul meant when he said in **Philippians 4:6 (NIV)** *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* Vs. 7 goes on to say that if we will pray and stop worrying about things, then God give us His peace, and He will *"guard our hearts and our minds."* That tells me that faith cancels out worry!

Furthermore, Jesus gave the definitive answer to worry when He said, *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and*

all these things will be given to you as well." **Matthew 6:33 (NIV)**. Seeking His kingdom first means we approach God in faith. We believe in His provisions, and we obey His Word no matter what; even when it doesn't make sense; and even when we can't see what God is doing. When we do that, He'll give us "*all these things*" that we need, just when we need it.

When it comes to our church, God's timing is perfect too. I'm not worried or anxious about any of our needs, because I'm just dumb enough to believe that God will do whatever He wants to do at the perfect time. In fact, the timing will be so perfect; it will be obvious that God is in it!

Conclusion: Abraham called the place where God provided the lamb, "*The Lord will Provide.*" because that's where he came to fully understand the measure of his faith in God and the providing power of God – something he'd not fully understood before. God provided for his need. He provided as he was obedient to him. He provided just at the right time.

What is God calling you to do? Is he calling you to be saved today? Obey Him, come to Him, and don't worry about what anybody else may think.

Is He calling you to join this church? If so, you already know it. Don't delay it any longer. Come and help us and let us help you. Let's work together for the kingdom of God.

Is He calling you to invest your time, talents, and treasure in the future of this church? Don't worry over it. Trust in Him to provide. As Abraham raised the knife in obedience, raise your

hand and your voice and say, "*Here am I. I'll give as the Lord has prospered me. I'll serve as the Lord has called me. I'll be the Christian God wants me to be. I'll do what God says, and make that sacrifice because I know the Lord will provide.*"