

# Genesis 22-23

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[0:00] Well, if you want to turn with me in your Bibles, Bible apps to Genesis 23. We'll spend a short time in Genesis 23 and then we'll spend longer on chapter 22.

But we're coming to our end in this series just with Abraham and Sarah. It's been a little bit like watching a reality television program, hasn't it? As we've kind of journeyed with them, mercifully not like the Kardashians.

But we have gained somewhat unparalleled access and insight into their lives. The camera, if you like, has taken us up close and personal in their discussions, their reactions, their faith, their finer moments, their downright ugly, sinful faults and failures.

And now we're here in these sort of final chapters, sort of looking at the life of Abraham and Sarah. And in particular, chapter 23 here, encountering Sarah's death.

In which, we'll spend a short time, but just thinking a little bit about Abraham's grief, but also his gritty faith in the midst of it. So first of all, Abraham's grief, look at verse 1, chapter 23.

[1:10] Sarah lived to be 127 years old. She died at Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. And Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. Abraham grieves.

Though he is a man of faith, still he grieves this great loss. And many people may have said to him, oh, you know, she's had a good innings. She's now with the Lord. We don't grieve like others do. We have an eternal hope. And of course, all of that is wonderfully true. And our grief as believers is different. Because we have this wonderful hope.

But we still grieve. We still weep. As we see Abraham doing here in verse 2. And in some ways, the longer the marriage, 60 years for Abraham and Sarah in their case, the larger the whole that is left behind.

Hudson Taylor's wife died after only 12 years of marriage from illness in China. And he said this. He said, love gave the blow that for a little time makes the desert more dreary.

[2:22] But heaven more home-like. He said, love gave the blow that for a little time makes the desert more dreary. In other words, it's hard. But he said, but makes heaven more home-like.

So Abraham grieves. We don't grieve like others do. But we do grieve in the light of this great eternal hope. And it's something of that eternal hope that we see in Abraham's greedy faith.

And this really unusual kind of, what just seems like a sort of property negotiation. But here, verse 3. Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.

He said, I'm a foreigner. I'm a stranger among you. He said, sell me some property for a burial site so that I can bury my dead. The reply, verse 5.

The Hittites replied to Abraham. Sir, listen to us. You're a mighty prince among us. So we get a sense of just who Abraham was in that context. Bury your dead in the choicest of tombs.

[3:22] None of us will refuse to do his tomb for burying your dead. In other words, they are saying, that's fine. You can borrow any cave or any tomb that you choose. And so then Abraham's got a different thing in mind.

And he takes their kind of offer of any tomb. And he has one in particular. He requests to buy, verse 7, the tomb at Machpelah. At the end of that field there. And then verse 10, Ephraim says, you can have the field and the cave.

Basically, because nobody wants to just, I don't want to just sell you the cave. Nobody's going to buy the field off me if I've got a cave at the end of it. That's been used by somebody else for a tomb. Again, Abraham is very keen to own it, not just borrow it.

And so he offers full price. Verse 14, Ephraim starts off by suggesting price. An asking price that actually is well over the asking price.

As it should be. But Abraham, verse 16, is not haggling. He seizes the opportunity. He weighs the money there and then using their scales in front of the witnesses. And it's a done deal.

[4:30] But why is this recorded here? Why has Abraham done this? Well, actually, he's living according to the promises of God given.

A son, a nation, a place. Sarah has died. And rather than just taking her back maybe to her homeland and Ur and the Chaldeans, much further north.

No, she's to be buried here in the land that God has promised. That yet, he's promised yet to be fully realized. He also, as we'll see in chapter 25, is going to be buried here in this tomb, in the land that God has promised.

That is a promise that has not yet been realized. Jacob, his grandson, will insist that he will not be buried in Egypt, but will be buried there in the land that God has promised.

See, Isaac, it's Isaac. Abraham is living according to the promise that God has given him. This tomb, this cave, this field, it was a token of what is yet to be revealed to be realized in the future.

[5:35] And in that sense, he's emulating a very dear gospel principle. Emulating how gospel dynamics work in the heart of faith. Because at the heart of our faith is also a tomb, which is a token of that which is yet to be realized.

Of course, that tomb is empty. Because our future, to quote the hymn, It is well as the sky, not the grave. Our burial place will one day be, you know, will be the grave.

But that is not our end. One day that grave in which we are buried will also be empty. As the promise that God has given to us is fully realized when he comes and takes us home to be with him.

And as we age, or we know that the tomb, if you like, the grave approaches, our faith too is to be a gritty one that holds to the truths that have been promised to us.

But more than just promised, that our faith is trusting in the one who promises and is able to accompany us as we walk that path towards the grave.

[6:51] Because he also has walked that path before us and is more than able to comfort us and to identify with us and encourage us on that road.

As we hold to the great promises of that future that will be fully realized. And even if, as we age, our mind wanders because of disease, the shepherd knows exactly where we are.

We may be lost in our own minds, but we are not lost and can never be lost to him. And he will keep us to that day. See, Sarah's filled grave and her greater son Christ, empty grave, they preach to us, don't they?

They preach to us, hold to the promise of a home, a future inheritance kept for you that will be fully realized in the same way as the promise of God to the people of God in the Old Covenant Church. It was realized that they were given the land promised. We too will also be given that which is promised, an inheritance that will never spoil or faint. And so this, as in this passage in chapter 23, seems somewhat obscure to us, is a wonderful truth of these things.

[8:12] And actually, we're seeing a very different Abraham here, aren't we, from the Abraham that we've become accustomed to, who has been sort of faltering and failing and sometimes succeeding in his walk of faith.

But actually, we see a similar Abraham in chapter 22. Let's look at that, flick back to that chapter with me, where we see Abraham's test of faith.

And maybe if you've not come across this story before, if you're new to all and you're flicking down and thinking, you're sort of beginning to be filled with horror, thinking, what on earth is going on here? Well, actually, of course, as we look at this, we know what Abraham doesn't know, that God is not going to allow Isaac to be sacrificed because God is appalled by human sacrifice.

That is not the God whom we worship. In comparison, certainly, with the false gods that were worshipped around that certainly did demand that. So what's going on here?

Let's work through the text. So first of Abraham's test, verse 1, chapter 22. Sometime later, God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham, here I am, he replied.

[9:25] And already we're seeing a sort of a responsiveness of faith that maybe we haven't quite glimpsed before in Abraham. He sort of answers with an expectant willingness, joyfulness even.

A clear voice of God to him is being responded to with a clear voice of a sort of cheerful and glad response. Here I am. There's nothing here of an inner lack of reality in his spirit and his walk with the Lord, even though he has aged greatly.

There's still a vividness in his walk that we should note and long for in our own lives, that as we go on, we don't lose that vividness of walk with the Lord, becoming jaded with the years.

Verse 2. Then God said, Take your son, your only son, whom I love, Isaac, to go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him. I've lost total confidence, by the way, in pronouncing words I'm not familiar with.

Actually, I had a conversation with somebody who is a Hebrew expert, and he said that whether it's Abimelech or Abimelech, both of them are wrong, actually, in Hebrew. So we're all wrong. That's good, you know.

[10:41] Now, sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you. So you can imagine, even for Abraham, as he hears this, this is way left of feel of anything that he's kind of experienced.

He's thinking, what? But it is a very different Abraham from the one that we've maybe become accustomed to, who is responding here, isn't it?

Verse 3. So early the next morning, Abraham got up, loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

And I wonder if some of the strain that Abraham is under shows in these verses. Maybe I'm reading too much into it, but he's up early. Is he up early because of a sleepless night?

And then he loads the donkey and then gets his servant and Isaac ready, but then he cuts the wood. It's almost in the wrong order. Is he not thinking straight? Is that why those kind of details are here? Is that what they're indicating?

[11:48] But still, he carries on. And what we're seeing, Abraham, is a new level of kind of the obedience of faith. He has been walking by faith, and that faith is working out in a willing spirit and a desire to obey the one who has shown such grace and kindness and goodness to him.

It feels as if he's reached a place of total surrender almost in his life. All I have, all I am is yours. Your will, not mine, be done.

What you say, I will do. You have become the highest affection in my life. That means everything that takes second place to you. It's almost kind of a, to give it a coin, to give it a sort of Gethsemanean, isn't it?

Like Jesus in the garden, who, yes, wrestled with what was to come, but, you know, take the cup from me, and yet was able to say, not my will, but yours be done. And that's giving us kind of echoes of the cross that's going to be so dominant in this passage, isn't it?

And I guess as we sort of reflect on our own faith, as we reflect on Abraham and what he's sort of demonstrating to us and why God has included this, in thinking about sort of Abraham's vividness of faith, even in his old age, I guess it should help us to stop and reflect and say, where am I in my faith?

[13:19] Am I just sort of coasting along? Have I lost some of that inner reality, some of that vividness? Do I have that desire to just be totally surrendered to the Lord in the way that we saw Jesus in the garden?

In the way that we're seeing, I think, Abraham here. And we might think back on our own experience. I know for myself as a young Christian, I look back, and though my young face was very wooden and legalistic, there was something of just a genuine desire.

I've been saved. This is amazing. Lord, I've given my life totally to you. So, you know, I was studying engineering, but I had a real call to go to Poland with IFE.

I'll do it, Lord. You just tell me, point me the way to go. I'll do what you want me to do. You want me to work with UCCF after that? Great. Send me wherever you want me to go. There was a vividness in those callings in those years.

There's elements of it for many of us when we moved lock, stock and barrel to start Cornerstone. Can you think of other similar seasons in your own life where you just had that readiness of spirit that just wanted to please the Lord, just wanted to follow the Lord, no matter the cost?

[14:46] I think the years I felt to it in recent years, and I've mentioned this before, was in the days leading up to my, you know, the operation two years ago, wrestling with going, you know, under the knife.

And, you know, I didn't want to lose control, didn't, you know, and so on, and sort of wrestling in my heart with the Lord. And I had to get to the point where I had to say, Lord, I love you more than I

love my life.

I love you even more than I love my family, my work, my life here.

And I trust you. And either I'm going to wake up in the moment to see you face to face, or I'm going to wake up minus a section of my colon, and I've got a few years yet to walk and to serve you and to love you and my family and all that you've given to me.

But in this moment, I surrender to you. Your will be done. I surrender all. And in that moment, I got the peace. And I don't mean to get all mystical and kind of, oh, you know, whatever.

[16:01] I'm just trying to get us to the point where we're actually, are those the kind of dynamics, that's the dynamics I want in my own life. I wouldn't say that I've lived in that kind of total surrender ever since that moment.

I certainly have not. But when it comes to sort of looking at Abraham and his example, it's a challenge, isn't it? Are we just coasting in our faith? Is there a desire to keep drawing closer to him and deeper consecration, if you like, and deeper surrender?

It forces us to ask questions. What do I love more than you, Lord? What is the thing, if he asked us to give it up, that we would really struggle to trust him with?

It might be a career. It might be proximity to family or friends that you have at the moment. It might be the comforts you enjoy, the salary level that we have, the degree of health that we have, the neighborhood that we live in.

And I guess we should stop and ask, well, why is that? It's a trust issue, isn't it, ultimately? I'm not sure, Lord, that you have my good as well as your glory in mind.

[17:18] So if you don't mind, I'll look after my good. And those things that we kind of struggle and tussle to let go, they are probably, in effect, idols in our hearts.

And of course, idols make good servants, but very poor masters. And they are the things that will be fueling our fears and our insecurities, as they disorder our priorities, as they misshape our actions and our reactions, robbing us of that gospel-shaped life that Christ calls us and draws us towards. These idols of our hearts make us slaves to them because they'll never satisfy. They always are demanding more, aren't they? They'll satisfy for a while, but not in the long term.

And they will rob us of the things that they promised, whether they will rob us of our good health, our relationships, even our walk with the Lord. They'll hold us back in our Christian lives from the thing that actually we, in a sort of a moment like this when we have a chance to reflect on what we really desire, they hold us back from.

Because we find it tricky to let go or to deal with the sin that we need to deal with in order to kind of keep walking vividly before the Lord. And maybe he stops us from considering a call out of the ministry that we're in in the workplace to awards a call to work with a Christian charity or church, for example.

[18:56] I don't know if this is helpful or not, but I was listening to a podcast this week. It was really talking about vision, but I think the same thing applies here. They defined vision as a clear picture of a preferred future.

Vision is a clear picture of a preferred future. What is our vision, if you like, for our life this week, this month, this year, with the Lord?

Do we, are we just looking to kind of make it through the week? You know, get the kids out to school on time, no major ride, managing to spin all the plates at work that we're trying to kind of spin? Or are we, do we have a preferred future in which we're doing, well, maybe all of that kind of stuff, but actually not alone, but with Christ.

Very clear and very present in it. What is our vision for this week? What is our preferred, clear picture of a preferred future? Do you know what I mean?

Do you know what I'm trying to kind of lead us to think about as we reflect on Abraham's life and our life as well? And please don't hear me say, come on, you can do better than that.

[20:10] Rather hear me say, listen to Christ's gracious invitation to you in this week to let him, or be conscious of his walking beside you.

He's actually there anyway. But just to be conscious of it and to walk with him in it. Hear his gracious call towards that. His preferred future, if you like, for you.

And I think as we come to the table today, I pray that these are the kind of things that are in our hearts. And it's just that we hear him saying, come on, a little bit closer. A little bit closer this week.

Okay, back to Abraham. Verse four. On the third day, Abraham looked and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you. And he said the three day journey, he said three days of kind of reflecting on this. This testing that's going on is no speedy matter.

[21:16] I guess some of the things that are going on is that the time in testing, if you like, tests the depth of his consecration, the depth of his faith, the depth of his trust as time goes on.

Because in that period of time, he could have just tapped out and thought, nah, not doing this. I'm heading back home. But he persists. And during a testing season, whether that's because of health or job, financial pressure, family issues, it can be a prolonged period, can't it?

Where we have to keep seeking the presence, the peace, the power, the patience, the perspective of the Lord. Where we have to keep almost preaching the gospel to our hearts, gospel logic to our hearts.

And believing it sometimes, even if we're not feeling it because of the pressure of the situation. Or let others come alongside us and help us in that period as we struggle.

To sort of carry us along as the Lord carries us along. Helping us to that preferred feature of walking with him and in him, in it, alongside the one who is there anyway, aware of the one who is there anyway.

[22:41] The writer of the Hebrews gives us an insight into this logic. Look at Hebrews chapter 11, and it's page 1029 if you're sort of new to looking at the Bible. Hebrews chapter 11, page 1029.

And then down at verse 17. Now by faith, Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.

He who'd embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only, even though God had said to him, it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead. And so in a manner of speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. So he's kind of logicking things out.

He's applying the promises of God. He's applying gospel thinking, if you like. that God had given him a promise. And God keeps his promises.

[23:49] I've seen that, he's thinking. God has given this boy life. He's not going to just give him life only to forfeit it here, and therefore forfeit the promise that he gave that is through Abraham's offspring and so on.

He said, I may be logicking, I've seen a dead womb come alive. I've seen old bear young. I've seen death to life. So even if he dies, yet will he live?

Is that what's going to happen? Because God, I know, is not going to abandon his promise. That's just not how he works. That's not how I've seen him. See his mature faith sort of working these things out.

And he gives, I think, a hint of this in verse 5. we will worship and we will come back. And in a sense, he's doing it, isn't it?

Is he doing, living out his vision of a preferred future that he would desire to live by faith in the promises of God? You know what it's like when you learn to ride a bike, maybe a parent or an older sibling has been helping you out and they're kind of, they've got the back of the seat and you're cycling along and you're jabbering away, wobbling away and before you know it, you look back and they're way back in the distance.

[25:04] You've been jabbering all to yourself, wobbling all to yourself but you're doing it! You're doing it! You're riding the bike! The preferred future has been realized. You wonder if, you know, it's not a great illustration but in terms of Abraham's kind of walk, in terms of our walk, God has been holding onto the bike and suddenly here it feels like, Abraham, I'm doing it!

I'm doing it! I'm living by faith! I'm living according to the promises! Of course, God never really lets go of the bike, does he? He's always with us, holding us. That's where we want him anyway, isn't it? He's living out his preferred future, not the one where he throws in the towel. Verse 6, Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac and he himself carried the fire and the knife and as the two of them went together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father, to his father Abraham, Father?

Yes, my son Abraham replied, well, the fire and the wood are here, Isaac said, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Somebody points out that in Isaac asking this question, he asks the question that dominates the rest of scripture.

Where's the lamb for the offering? It's going to come up time and again, isn't it? It will come up in the Exodus when the lamb is sacrificed and the angel of the Lord passes over those houses whose door frames have been marked with the blood of the lamb.

[26 : 40] It will dominate the first five books of the Bible, in particular the book of Leviticus. It will be the heart of temple worship. Where is the lamb that will be brought for the forgiveness of sin to enable us to stand before the Lord and worship him?

Where is the atoning blood of the lamb? It will be spoken about the prophets like Isaiah, chapter 53, when he's speaking about looking to the future about the lamb who would be led like a lamb to the slaughter, pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace being upon him, by his wounds we are healed.

This question about where is the lamb to be offered dominates the scriptures, doesn't it? Till the point where John the Baptist proclaimed him and said, behold, here is the lamb of God who's going to take away the sins of the world.

And in reply to his son, he speaks more than he knows and he speaks of God's provision. Verse 8, Abraham answered, God himself will provide the lamb.

God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together.

Verse 9, when they reached a place God had told them about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it.

[27 : 59] He bound his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on the top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son, but the angel of the Lord called out from heaven, Abraham, Abraham.

Here I am. He replied, do not lay a hand on the boy, he said, do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught in its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place, the Lord will provide.

And to this day on the mountain of the Lord it will be, it's said on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided. And immediately we have questions like, why is a ram not a lamb?

We're not told in the passage or anywhere else in scripture, is it because actually Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, it was an adult. And so here is an adult lamb being provided.

[29 : 04] whatever the answer is to these questions, God provides a ram.

It's an acceptable sacrifice, a substitute for Isaac. And if even though, you know, can you know the story, we all kind of breathe a sigh of relief, you feel the tension in the story, don't you?

And actually there's a general principle here because there are all sorts of questions that we probably explored actually throughout our time with Abraham where we have questions, but they're not, they're kind of not unpacked in the passage or elsewhere in the scriptures.

And I suppose there's a general kind of principle that we hold to, I think Alistair Begg is probably the one who coined it, but we keep the main, the plain things, the main things.

And the main things, the plain things, the main things. The main thing, well, whatever, you know what I mean. The plain things, the main things, and the main things, the plain things.

[30 : 08] And yes, it's fine to ask questions about it and think about this and think about that, it's absolutely fine. But here's the thing, it can end us in such a rabbit hole in our thinking and our discussion, you kind of get lost, you lose the point of the whole passage.

So we kind of keep the plain things, the main things, and the main things, the plain things. And of course, we know that what is happening here foreshadows, doesn't it, what is to come.

Every story whispers his name. The coming of the Lamb of God, he would take away the sins of the world and hopefully, it delighted your heart in your community group as you sort of saw the parallels.

That Jesus, like Isaac here, is the only, verse two, the only begotten son of the Father. How Jesus, in agreement with the Father, is led by, in a sense, his Father, to go up to Mount Moriah, verse two. Where is Mount Moriah? Well, 2 Chronicles, chapter three, verse one, tells us it's where Jerusalem is built on. That is the place where the Lord will provide, and he certainly did for us.

[31 : 15] So he goes up to the Mount of Moriah. Of course, the Lord Jesus, when he arrives there, possibly arrives at the time when all the sheep from the countryside were being herded for the

Passover sacrifice.

And he too is led like a lamb to the slaughter. He too carried the wood on his shoulders like verse six, the wooden beam on the cross up the hill.

his Father carrying not a knife and fire, but a burning judgment to that place. Providing, not just for Abraham, but for you and I, the substitute for our sin.

The Lamb of God who would take the sin of the world, the Lamb of God who would die in our place, take the judgment that we deserve to give us the life in Christ that we do not. Take us out of Adam's curse which we've been learning by all three Genesis and they died and they died into Christ's blessing where we will live both now and forevermore.

And all the while, Abraham is learning in this period of testing that God can be trusted even when he cannot be understood. God can be trusted even when he cannot be understood.

[32 : 32] Abraham's obedience of faith in a sense it delights God's heart.

It doesn't make him more acceptable to God. His righteousness is by faith alone, but his humble obedience warms the heart of the Father. We've said this before, like, you know, we love our children's, you know, we don't love them anymore, but when they come and present to us, you know, something that they've made for us, whether it's at school or, you know, I did this for you mommy or daddy.

It warms our hearts, doesn't it? Delights us. I did this for you. God cannot love us anymore, but as we walk in that humble obedience of faith, we're seeking to delight his heart, aren't we?

I've done this for you, Lord. because you did that for me. And how does God respond in all of this?

Well, an interesting end here is a sort of double guarantee of a promise and an oath or a vow.

Verse 15, the angel of the Lord called Abraham from heaven a second time and said, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

[33 : 59] Your descendants will take possession of the cities of your enemies and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me. And Abraham returned to his servants and they set off together for Beersheba and Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

What's going on here? Well, again, the writer of the Hebrews helps us out. Hebrews chapter 6, if you want to turn, again, stick a digital finger in Genesis, if you like, and turn with me to Hebrews. Chapter 6. And again, if you're using the church Bibles, that's, and you're new to it, 1204. And starting at verse 13.

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.

And so, after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Verse 16, people swear by someone greater than themselves and they always confirm what is said and puts an end to all argument.

[35 : 14] But God, because God wanted to make an unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. He did this so that by two unchangeable things, two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and sure. It enters into the sanctuary behind the curtain where our forerunner Jesus has entered on our behalf.

And here, the writer of the Hebrews is telling us chapter 6, in chapter 22 of Genesis are the two unchangeable things. His words, there's no need for, of course, there's no need for anything else. His word is sure because he cannot lie. But it's almost as if he raises his hand to heaven and says, actually, and also, I swear by myself. In other words, I will not let this fail.

I would rather die than before this fails. So he gives a double assurance, an assurance from him who cannot lie and him, secondly, who cannot die. And as someone said, it's as if God stamps his footprint here in Genesis, deeply in Genesis 22, as one of the footprints, ultimately, that stamps through the Old Testament that will lead us to the cross where Christ, in a sense, gives us a triple assurance of these things, that this promise, inheritance, is ours.

[36 : 56] He, whoever, a promise, whoever believes in me will live even though they die. In a sense, through the oath, through his cross and resurrection, yes, God cannot die, but the God-man can.

He came to die in our place and also by his Holy Spirit, which is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the day of Christ Jesus, Ephesians 1.14.

That spirit that testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God and these truths and promises are ours and should we doubt it, we'll remember he cannot lie and he will not lie and he has died to make it sure that it is so in our lives and he's given to us, he's promised Holy Spirit to seal us for that day.

See, what we've been seeing in all of this is God outworking, in a sense, his vision for Abraham's life of a preferred future. As Abraham is learning to walk by faith, as he puts that faith into, to work in the greater realities of life, as he grieves over his wife, but also as he seeks to walk humbly in the obedience of faith before his gods.

So as you come to the table, as you reflect on this week, hear God's gracious invitation to you and I to walk in his vision for our lives, his preferred future for us this week, this month, this year.

[38:30] to walk beside him because he's there. Sometimes need to maybe tuck in behind him because what we're facing is hard, but we're still with him.

Faith in the faithful God, trusting the trustworthy God, remembering the promises of God who remembers his promise and oath to us, to stick with us, to be there for us and with us, to love us, to hold us, to keep us, to delight in us and to bring us through to that future and that realized reality that he has held for us and to help us to walk in delightful obedience to him as we face each day. And as we come to the table after that, we're going to sing these words. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my riches gain I count but loss and poor contempt and all my pride.

It's like a prayer, isn't it? Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the death of Christ my God all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood and see from his head his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.

Did air such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crime? And where the whole realm of nature mine that were an offering far too small, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.