

## 28. The Powerful Seed who brings Peace (2007)

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[ 0 : 00 ] And in our recent studies, we've been seeing in these chapters the beginning of a redeeming pattern. And what we see today is that it's all about the birth of a powerful seed who brings peace.

Now when you read this incident that we read together, it might at first seem a strange incident to be found at this point in the story. But the opening words of verse 22 make it very clear to us that the writer is deliberately connecting these events with the events of Isaac's birth and weaning in verses 1 to 21.

It's at that time, he says, that these things happen. That is, we're to understand that this episode was related to, and in fact a consequence of, the arrival of Isaac, the promised seed, who brought delight in his birth, but also division to the household of the covenant by his establishment in life, his weaning.

So the promised seed is secure, he's weaned, he's not dead in childbirth and infancy as would have been all too common in those times. And he's safe, we've seen, from the rivalry of Ishmael, his half-brother who has now departed from the camp.

But what about the future? Especially as regards the land where they sojourned. It was still a place, wasn't it, of rival kings and armies.

[ 1 : 28 ] Will the seed be safe in the future? What about the rest of God's promises that all hung on the future of this birth? What difference does this birth, according to promise, actually make?

Well, these verses show God demonstrating to Abraham, and therefore demonstrating to Moses' readers, and of course that includes us, demonstrating that he is the God who keeps all his promises.

We see in this passage the affirmation of every single one of God's promises to Abraham, way back in Genesis 12, verses 1 to 3. Every single one is being fulfilled.

It's being fulfilled step by step, just as verse 1 of chapter 21 reminded us. As God had said, as God had promised. We see the progeny that God promised.

Isaac, the promised seed, the son and heir, is born. He's the beginning of a great people. We see God's presence and protection to bless those who bless Abraham, and to curse those who curse him.

[ 2 : 34 ] We see God's place confirmed to Abraham in putting down roots in the land. And we see that he experiences the beginning of the pattern of God's plan, as he brings blessing and peace to a pagan nation and its king, through a covenant of peace with Abimelech, the Philistine, the pagan king of the land.

Now what's this story telling us? Why does Moses bother to record it? And why does he put it right here in our narrative? Why is he telling us that all this happened at that time?

Well it's because he's telling us again how special this birth really is, and how powerful this birth according to promise is. The birth of God's promised seed is a powerful birth that brings peace.

It issues in a covenant of peace for pagan nations and their kings. A covenant of peace with God's chosen covenant servant. Here, if you like, is a long promised birth that brings division and conflict, yes, within the company of the circumcised, and yet, at the same time, results in the homage of Gentile kings.

Isn't that striking? Isn't there something eerily familiar about that pattern? If you don't think so, try reading Matthew chapter 2 later on this afternoon. Well let's look at the story, beginning at scene 1 then, in verses 22 to 24, which is all about the power of God's presence.

[ 4 : 05 ] The power of God's presence with his covenant servant. And the message of these verses is that this God is a God who is faithful. Faithful, faithful even to imperfect human servants like

Abraham.

These verses demonstrate to us the power of God's covenant presence to attract the pagan world to seek blessing and to seek peace by joining themselves with God's covenant servant.

Here comes Abimelech, the pagan king. We've already met him in chapter 20. Here comes the pagan king suing for peace with Abraham. An astonishing episode, don't you think?

Happening at that time. The time when Isaac's future had been secured by his weaning. The time when he was protected for the future as Abraham's sole heir.

Here is a Gentile king who seems, in a way, to grasp more of the significance of that than many of those in the household of circumcision. Again, doesn't that sound familiar?

[ 5 : 09 ] Verse 22 tells us that Abimelech seems to see clearly the reality that God is with Abraham in a special way. That his hand is upon him as a chosen servant.

And therefore, Abimelech knows that he must ensure that he's at peace with this man. He can't be in conflict with him. He must be with him and not against him.

So, verse 23 says, Swear to me here by God that you'll deal kindly with me. Now, notice, he assumes that God's promise to Abraham is true.

Because Abimelech here is talking about the future, isn't he? He's talking about his descendants. He's talking about his posterity. He's assuming that Abraham's descendants are going to be there in the land, just as God has promised.

He grasps the significance of God's promise to Abraham and he acts accordingly. He's a Gentile.

[ 6 : 08 ] He's a pagan. But he is determined to throw in his lot with the people of this God. It's an extraordinary thing, isn't it? The power of God's presence with his servant Abraham to affect that response in this total pagan.

And Abraham, you see, is experiencing God's promise to him in action. Here he is being a blessing to those of other nations of the earth, despite all of his faults, despite his failings.

And remember, Abimelech certainly knows all about Abraham's faults and failings. Remember back in chapter 20. In fact, that's very probably why in verse 23 Abraham says, Swear that you won't deal falsely with me.

Because that's exactly what Abraham had done in the past, isn't it? And yet, despite that, he senses the power of God's presence on the life of this man at that time.

At the time of the birth and the establishment of the seed of promise. But also, of course, and this is surely significant, at that time when Abraham had exhibited great obedience to the call of God, to trust him.

[ 7 : 18 ] And to show his trust and his commitment to God's covenant through the personal pain and the anguish and the cost of having to send out his son and his slave woman, Hagar, for the sake of God's plan and purpose.

It was at that time that the power of God's presence was a very evident reality in his life. That his life was such a witness among the pagans that there was real fruitfulness in abundance through his personal witness.

Again, that's an abiding pattern that the scripture teaches us, isn't it? The God of power makes his home. The God of power abides with those, says Jesus, who love him and keep his word.

If we abide in him, says Jesus, we will bear much fruit. Not apart from him. Apart from me you will do nothing. He gives his spirit to those who obey him, says the New Testament.

But isn't it a wonderful encouragement to obey God? To consecrate, to commit our lives wholly to him for his covenant purposes, whatever the cost personally, whatever the pain, whatever the forfeits might be in terms of this world's belonging, this world's relationships.

[ 8 : 38 ] To know the power of God's presence in our lives as his servants. The drawing power for the world around. Isn't that a great encouragement to obey God? Think of the encouragement it would be for Moses' first heroes on the brink of the land with everything that lay before them.

When Moses, remember, was handing over the task to Joshua to lead the people across the Jordan into the land in Deuteronomy 31. These were his words. Listen. Be strong and courageous. Do not be in fear or in dread of the pagan kings. For it's the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. You see, that's just what they're seeing here in this passage as well, isn't it?

Don't fear the pagan world. Don't fear the kings and the rulers and the leaders of the armies. Look at Abraham. Abraham. When God's covenant servants consecrate themselves to him, when they

walk in faith and in trust, even the pagan world will notice, will see that the power of God is present with you.

And they'll fear. And they'll run to you to seek peace. If you read on in the story of the people of Israel, you'll find that's exactly what happened.

[ 9 : 48 ] There's an astonishing story, isn't there, in Joshua chapter 2. Do you remember where Rahab, the pagan, the Canaanite, the harlot woman, when she echoes exactly the words of Abimelech, the king here.

Do you remember what she says? We've seen and we've heard that the Lord, your God, is God in heaven above and in earth beneath. And that he's with you in all that you do, she says. Now, swear to me by the Lord, that as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my Father's house and deliver our lives from death.

Isn't that striking? Because she sees the power of God's presence with his covenant servants, his people, as they're advancing at God's command in obedience to his call.

Later on in Joshua, in fact, you find another astonishing incident. The story of the Gibeonites. They were a people who were so desperate to save themselves from the advancing people of Israel that they go to an elaborate deception and they deceive their way into making a covenant of peace with Joshua and God's people.

They force themselves in by deception to blessing with God's people. And having done so, in fact, God honors that. He honors their persistence to find peace through his servants.

[ 11 : 08 ] And it's a lasting protection. Many, many centuries later, David the king takes vengeance on Saul because he dared to disregard the promise of protection to the Gibeonites.

You see, when God's people trust him, when they obey him, when they're committed to his great covenant purposes, above everything else, to advance his kingdom, he is powerfully present in the midst to bring peace, to bring blessing to pagan people who sense that and who are moved to sue for peace with the God of gods through his covenant servants.

That's the pattern. Of course, we shouldn't be surprised, should we, to see that pattern at work here because, of course, as well as being history, and of course, the Old Testament is history, it's the history of God's redemption, it's not just history.

It's prophecy, isn't it? It's a book of promises looking forward to ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Moses wrote of me, said the Lord Jesus himself.

And we shouldn't be surprised to find that the same pattern as this comes to its climax in the abundantly powerful presence of God in the servant of the covenant, the Lord Jesus himself.

[ 12 : 23 ] The one who is God with us in his presence and his power. From whom the power of God's personal presence shone forth in full glory and in might, in all its fullness, drawing people to himself.

Even as a young boy, do you remember, Luke tells us in his gospel, the favor of God was upon him, evidently. And his life, throughout his life, showed exactly the same pattern.

Within the household of Israel, within the people of the circumcision, well, often, yes, there was conflict and division, wasn't there? Just as there was right at the beginning. And yet, so often, to those outside, to the pagan, to the Gentiles, so often, there was that wonderful drawing power, wasn't there?

Think of the Gentile kings, who came across deserts, to pay homage at his birth. Think of the Gentile centurion, in Matthew chapter 8, who Jesus said, showed greater faith and understanding, than anyone in the whole of Israel.

Perhaps the most wonderful of all, most striking of all, is that story in Matthew chapter 15, of the Canaanite woman. She's called specifically, the Canaanite woman, the pagan woman, who came to Jesus and said, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.

[ 13 : 44 ] The very same words, in the Greek, incidentally, as the words used by Ahab, translated in the Greek Old Testament. Deal kindly with me, said Rahab.

Have mercy on me. Do you remember, when that Canaanite woman, came to Jesus? Sounds like Jesus, being terribly, terribly harsh at first, doesn't it? You're an outsider, he says.

You're a Gentile dog, in effect, is what he says to her. And yet, she comes back and says, Yes, Lord, but even the dogs, can lick up the crumbs, that fall from their master's table.

She wouldn't be put off. She forced herself, to find peace, in the presence of this one. She won't have no for an answer. And Jesus says to her, So great is your faith, be it unto you, even as you've

asked.

You see, all because of God's power, his presence with his people, his presence there with Jesus, his covenant servant, in absolute fullness, drawing the Gentile world, to see him.

[14:51] That's just what the prophet Isaiah said. The Lord will rise upon you. His glory will be seen upon you. A nation shall come to your light. Kings to the brightness of your rising.

And that's the great zenith, that's the great fulfillment, isn't it, in Jesus Christ, in God's covenant servant, where the presence of God himself was, in power and in glory and in might.

But it's a pattern, it's a pattern that is at work, all the way through the story of God's redemption, among his servants. It's reflected in Abraham's life, way back then.

And it's also the calling, isn't it, of all of those who are called to be servants of the covenant since Jesus' coming. That's what Jesus says to us. You are my witnesses.

You are my ambassadors to carry the power of my presence to all the pagan world, to the nations, to the ends of the earth. That's the meaning, isn't it, of the day of Pentecost. That's the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit, of the risen Lord, upon his church, that we might carry the presence of God to the nations for salvation.

[15:58] For all of those who will seek peace with God, through the gospel of his servant, through the gospel of Jesus Christ. You will receive power, said Jesus.

The power of my presence, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses, even to the ends of the world, the pagan world. He said just the same thing in the Great Commission, in different words, didn't he?

Go and make disciples of all nations, and I will be with you. My presence in power, to the end of the age. The power of God's presence with his servants.

Power to draw the outsider, the pagan, the enemy even, because they see that God is really with you in all that you do. That's exactly what we see demonstrated all through the book of Acts.

Acts chapter 2 verse 47 says, they had great favor with all the people. In other words, people could see that God was clearly among them. And it goes right on to say, and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

[17:04] Extraordinary power, isn't it? But remember, it is the power of God's presence among a committed and a consecrated people.

The previous verse in Acts tells us that they were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, and to prayer. They were selling their possessions and devoting everything they had to the one cause, the advance of Christ's kingdom.

They had glad and generous hearts. And that's why God's presence was so evident among them in power. Just like Abraham, they knew the cost of being God's covenant servants.

They knew the power of the risen Christ because they shared in his sufferings. You see, there's no cheap and easy way.

There's no cheap, easy steps to living life full of the power of God's presence. That's a false theology altogether. There's no special baptisms, no special blessings, no special things you can do, no special formulas.

[18:10] No, it's as one of the old Puritans said, out of the presses of pain cometh the soul's best wine. And that's the real challenge here. It is the presence of God among those servants who are deeply committed in obedience to the future of his kingdom.

But there's a great encouragement too, isn't there? That imperfect servants, that flawed servants of God like Abraham and like you and me, that where God's servants put his gospel demands right at the heart of their lives and where a fellowship of God's people put the word of God and obedience to the word at the heart of their corporate life, then the power of God's presence with his servants will be at work and it will be seen and it will draw people to the light of salvation in Jesus Christ. even to the total outsider, to the pagan, the great and the humble, the Abimelech, the king, and Rahab, the harlots. Even in our gatherings, just like today, this morning, Paul says, it will be so where God's word and commitment to that is right at the heart.

He says to the Corinthian church, if an unbeliever or an outsider comes in, however ignorant, the secrets of his heart will be disclosed and he will worship God and declare, God is really among you. Isn't that what we should be praying for for our gatherings? I wonder if you pray that every Sunday before you come to church. That's what we should be praying for. If we don't see it, Jesus says, you don't have because you don't ask.

[ 19 : 51 ] Let's not forget to ask often for the presence of God to be so evident to the outsider as it was with Abimelech and Abraham that they'll fall down on their faces before the Lord Jesus Christ and say, surely God is among you.

There's an encouragement, isn't there, for our daily lives, for our ordinary lives to live for Christ with all our might. Peter says to us, doesn't he, in his first letter, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners in exile.

You are just like Abraham, sojourners. I urge you to abstain from the passions of the flesh which war against your soul. Keep your conduct, he says, among the pagans, honourable, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on a day of visitation.

You see? We're just humble sojourners, we're just exiles in this world, but we too can be the witnesses that God uses to bring total outsiders, to rejoice in him, to seek peace with him.

That's the power of God's presence with his servants. Without that, no one will come to Jesus Christ. But with that, even a fallible and imperfect servant like Abraham, like you, like me, can be the drawing power of bringing people to Jesus Christ.

[ 21 : 15 ] Our God is wonderfully faithful, even to very imperfect servants. But there's more to see here than just the power of God's presence because verses 25 to 32 remind us very clearly of the pattern of God's peace.

The pattern of God's peace through his covenant servant. And the message is that this God is a God to be feared. His covenant of peace is serious.

It's not a trifling matter. And you see, these verses demonstrate to us a pattern that shows that peace with God's covenant servant isn't without cost. Not without cost to God's servant, nor is it without commitment to those who enter into that covenant of peace, to honor the due rights and the lordships of what is rightfully his.

Now remember, you see, the first readers of this book, Moses' people, knew all about covenants and oaths, didn't they? Their whole identity was that they were the people of the covenant God. They knew that when a covenant was sworn, even though it was a promise freely and graciously given as Abraham gives his promise in verse 24, I will swear, even though it was that, nevertheless, a covenant was never one-sided.

[ 22 : 31 ] A covenant oath also makes demands. It demands a response, doesn't it, of real commitment. And a commitment that is evident and visible in real life, in specific actions.

It's not just a matter of words. And that's just what we find here in the covenant that Abraham makes with Abimelech. That's the point of verse 25 if you look at it.

You see, just saying peace, peace, doesn't mean anything. It's just words, isn't it? Real peace involves action. Real peace must be made. Real peace must be observed.

Real peace costs. Look at what's going on today in Russia and Georgia. It's not peace just because everybody says we're at peace. Wrongs have got to be put right.

Troops have got to be removed. Borders have got to be respected. Peace has to be made. It costs. Otherwise it's pretend, isn't it? It's not real. And so Abraham says, yes, Abimelech, I will swear to be at peace with you.

[ 23 : 31 ] That's a promise. But now, there's this matter of the well that your servants have seized from me. If we're to have a covenant of peace, then, well, you must be true to it too. You need to put things right that are wrong between us.

See, Abraham's just being realistic, isn't he? He's saying to Abimelech, all right, you acknowledge that God is with me. You understand that his promise is for this land and for my offspring.

But you know as well as I do that without water, this land isn't worth anything to me. If you really want to confess your faith in God's promise to me, if you want to really find blessing through God's promise to me, you're going to have to yield in this reality.

Now, Abimelech says he doesn't know anything about it. We don't know whether he really didn't or whether he's just feigning innocence. But either way, Abraham forces him to show the reality of his desire for peace, doesn't he?

And notice, by the way, how different Abraham's approach is here back in chapter 20. Do you remember there he acted with deception, didn't he? It all ended in near disaster. But here, he seems to have learned to really trust God's promise to protect him.

[ 24 : 40 ] He seems to have learned to really trust God's promise of the land. And he just simply puts it straight to Abimelech. He demands his well back. Because, it's no real peace with God's

covenant servant if his rights and his demands are ignored.

And again, I wonder if you see a familiar pattern there. Yes, Abraham takes the initiative. He grants peace. But, he demands a right response. Abimelech must put things right.

He must commit to change his ways. And yet again, do you see, it's Abraham, it's God's covenant servant, who initiates and provides for the covenant making, the sacrifice.

Verse 27, he provides the cattle for the sacrifice. Verse 28, he provides the seven ewe lambs. It's God's servant, extraordinarily, who bears the cost of making this peace that's going to be real and lasting.

It's very striking, don't you think so? He pays a heavy price for what is actually his by right. And in doing so, he enables Abimelech to enter into a real covenant of peace, where real peace is truly made, where the wrongs of the past are truly righted.

[ 25 : 58 ] And yet, at the same time, God's covenant servant demands fidelity, he demands loyalty, he demands that Abimelech yield to him what is rightly his as God's chosen one.

Now again, I don't think it's fanciful at all to see in that at work a prophetic pattern, a shadow of the climax of the work of the great covenant servant, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus too called outsiders into his peace, even tax collectors and sinners, rank pagans. He called sinners freely by his grace, didn't he?

But he also called them to repentance. He called them to submission to his lordship, to yield to him everything that is his by rights. It was a call of grace. Yes, it was. Great grace.

Lord, have mercy on me. Deal kindly with me. I will swear to do so, he says. But come, follow me. Come, take up your cross.

[ 26 : 57 ] Be a true disciple, says Jesus. Give to me what is mine by right. Give me your life which I created for my glory. which exists for my glory and honor alone. That's the true gospel, isn't it?

There's no cheap grace in the call of the covenant gospel of God. The gospel is a call of grace, of real grace, but it's a call to real repentance, to commitment, to real discipleship.

Recognizing the true lordship, the true sovereignty of God's covenant servants in everything.

Recognizing the crown rights of the redeemer, as the former generation used to put it.

And the God of Abraham is the God of heaven and earth. And the God of Abraham has exalted Jesus Christ, his servant, to be Lord and Christ. And this servant came into our world to make peace, to make real peace, and to grant real, lasting peace with God.

And he offers that peace freely, doesn't he? He offers it in the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are near and to those who are far. But that same word, that same word demands submission.

[ 28 : 10 ] It demands yielding, soul control to everything that is his by rights. And that's the pattern of God's peace that's offered to the outsider all through the history of his covenant grace, whether in Abraham's day or in Jesus' day or in our day.

Just notice this also. It was when Abraham was unashamed and unafraid to challenge this pagan king openly with the demands of his covenant peace.

It was then that Abimelech found real peace with God's servant. Abraham must have been very tempted, mustn't he, to hide the frank demands of God's covenant to make his gospel of peace easier to have peace with Abraham.

That's what he tried to do before. Yes, peace, Abimelech, we can have peace and you don't need to worry. There's no need to change. You don't need to repent. There's no need to give up those precious wells or anything else.

There's no need, Abimelech, to demonstrate that you really do see me as having the rights over this land and over your livelihood. The kind of gospel you know that says, yes, I do believe in what God says about wells, but I just never like to talk about it.

[ 29 : 26 ] We don't want to put people off with a gospel which talks about you changing your behaviour too much, especially when God's anointed servant demands a change from you. We don't want to put on people a demand of a change in your theology of wells.

Let's keep that quiet. But no, you see, Abraham gave him the full gospel with all its demands. Demands about repentance and change.

Demands about things that had to be yielded to God's chosen servant as a consequence of his peace. And unlike, unlike back in chapter 20 where Abraham did try to hide the truth and it was a disaster, here, when he is confident in God's true covenant promise, here it is that the pagan

Abimelech actually responds.

And the oath that they swear is real and lasting so that it is enshrined forever in the very name of the place, Beersheba, the well of the seven or the well of the oath.

Do you see how that pattern of God's peace is an abiding pattern? It is when God's servants don't hide the true gospel but when we are confident in the power of God's presence and in the real promise of God's covenant to call people from every nation but to call them to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, to bow to his covenant lordship, it's then, then that even great men, rulers and kings, will bow the knee to Jesus.

[ 30 : 57 ] See, we instinctively think that to preach a demanding gospel is foolish, don't we? We want to hide the cost of submission to God's lordship.

We want to play down the demands. We want to not talk about repentance. We don't want to speak about yielding our lives to him, the precious wells of our thought life, our professional life, our social life, our financial life, our sex life, whatever it is.

We think that's foolishness to speak about such things. It's foolish to speak about God's demands, about punishment, about wrath, about hell, about all of these things.

Remember what Paul says to the Corinthian church. church. The truth is that it has pleased God through the apparent foolishness of this true gospel to save those who believe.

We preach a foolish gospel, a crucified Savior. and we preach a gospel of the one who demands that he is Lord over everything in your life.

[ 32 : 02 ] And yet, that is the pattern of God's peace through his covenant servant. And it's that gospel that alone is powerful to save. The true gospel always says in the words of Psalm 2, Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear. Rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in the way. Submit to the crown rights of he who makes peace with you.

He is a God to be feared. He offers peace. He promises peace. He makes peace at great personal cost. But he demands that you yield to him all his sovereign rights.

And that's always, always the pattern of God's peace. There's no other. But finally, don't miss verses 33 and 34 that speak of the permanence of God's provision.

The permanence of God's provision for his covenant servant. And the wonderful message here is that he is the God who is forever. Verse 33, Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

[ 33 : 22 ] God's servant Abraham receives at God's hand provision for all his earthly needs. Do you see that? He receives peace with Abimelech and his armies rather than being menaced by Phico.

and he receives security about the rights to a well, to the water that means life and that means a future. It's as important as that, isn't it?

In a dry and arid place, land is no use without water. We know that today. We're told more and more that water is the great commodity that wars will be fought over in this century. Back to verse 19 reminds us of it with Hagar in Ishmael.

It was when they found a well of water that guaranteed their life. And so God gives provision for Abraham in all his earthly life. But also he gives a fresh provision, doesn't he, for his spiritual walk. He gives him a new revelation about God himself. He calls him the everlasting God, the forever God. God's already revealed himself by several names to Abraham.

[ 34 : 20 ] Back in chapter 14, the God who is Elyon, the God most high, above every earthly Lord, so if you have his protection you need none other. The El Shaddai God, the all-sufficient one who can do every single thing that he promises.

The El Roy God, the God who sees, who sees all of your folly and all of your mess and yet restores you and prospers you. And now he discovers he's the forever God whose powerful presence is forever, not just fleeting.

whose pattern of working peace with his enemies is forever, not just occasional. Whose provision for his saints, for his servants is forever, even though, as verse 34 reminds us, even though Abraham is just a sojourner, just passing along in this life.

It seems that Abraham marked that fresh revelation by planting a tamarisk tree, a long-living, evergreen tree in Beersheba by this well. I'm sure we're to see that as an expression of trust in the God who is the forever God.

It reminds us, doesn't it, of the picture that the Bible uses of the one who knows and delights and trusts in the covenant God. Do you remember the first psalm? He is like that man who delights in the law of the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water, fruitful always, not withering, secure. [ 35 : 47 ] In all that he does, he prospers. It's the way I'm saying here, yes Lord, I believe you. I believe that you are the forever God. That what I've seen you do in the past and seen you do today, you will do also in the future.

That you'll be true to your promise. That you will be the permanent provider of all that I need. I can put roots down in this place because of that, he's saying.

Like this tree. Despite the pagan kings and their armies, despite the uncertainty of everything that life might afford because I trust in the permanence of your provision for me because you are the forever God.

Don't you think that was wonderful for Abraham to know? That the God who had done all this in his life and who promised all these things for the future that he is the forever God.

Unchanging. Everlasting. Don't you think that meant so much to him knowing that all his life he was just going to be a sojourner?

[ 36 : 52 ] Doesn't it make a difference to you also to know that? Because with this God, you see, with the permanent provider, with the forever God, on the one hand, you can accept that you are just the sojourner.

That your life is fragile and finite. It's often feeble that, yes, it may seem so little in its significance. You're living a passing life. You're ever drawing nearer to the twilight days of that life.

For some of us, it may seem very close. We're like the grass. We wither and we fade and we're gone. But yet, on the other hand, at the same time, with the forever God, we're like Abraham's tree. We're evergreen. We're rooted. We're permanent. We're planted by an abundant source of life-giving water. We belong forever to the forever God who has promised to be our provider all through this world and all through eternity.

And he's promised to be God forever to you because you, if you're in Christ, are Abraham's seed, heirs of the same promise. I don't know about you, but it means a lot to me.

[ 38 : 04 ] It means everything. It means however uncertain you are about your life in this world, it means I can put down roots for eternity. I can be secure because my God is the everlasting God because he is a God forever and I don't have to fear.

And let me tell you, when we realize how fragile our lives is, that means a very great deal. Just one day ago with all my family, we were going down the road in the car, went into a spin, spun off into a ditch and went backwards off the road and hit a tree.

That's why we weren't at the church picnic yesterday. And when you realize and are reminded just how fragile your life is, to know that you have roots with the God who is forever.

That means that you can face today and tomorrow. It means that you can live in the present without worry, without paralysis. It means you can trust the word of this God because he is the forever God, whether you come out of a car accident or whether you don't.

And so can you. And you can have greater assurance even than Abraham. He saw out of fire off that we have seen the glorious fulfillment of the day of Jesus Christ.

[ 39 : 23 ] And we have the words also of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the forever God. Let me close with them. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life.

Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, though you have little faith?

Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

You see, the fragility of our earthly lives as sojourners, it doesn't matter one whit when you are rooted in the future with the God who is forever. That liberates you to live now, doesn't it, for the things that matter.

That's why Jesus goes on and says, sell your possessions, give to the needy, provide for yourselves money bags that don't grow old, with treasures that do not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

[ 40 : 38 ] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. These are the words of the forever God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He is the God who is our permanent provider. Friends, the good news of the Gospel is that if you are here today and you belong to Jesus Christ, then you are Abraham's heirs.

Heirs of all these promises. Abraham's God is your God. So let's trust in the power of his presence among even imperfect servants like you and me.

The power of his presence to bring the blessings of peace to a pagan world. Our God is faithful. And let's be confident in the pattern of his peace through a Gospel that makes real peace but demands real commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all that is his.

He is a God to be feared. But above all, let's rejoice in the permanence of his provision to fail, frail sojourners like us, to fragile bodies, to those who live in an uncertain world not knowing what happens today or tomorrow.

[ 41 : 53 ] Because he's the God who is forever. the God who is powerfully present with us. God who makes peace through us.

And the God who will provide always for us because he's the forever God. Let's pray. Amen.

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

The God who is forever. Thank you, Heavenly Father, that we who name the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the great servant of your new covenant, we are the seed of Abraham and all that you demonstrated in his life you promised to us.

So help us to rejoice. And may we follow you more nearly that the power of your presence may be evident in us and upon us and around us and that the light of Jesus Christ may shine and go on shining that many may see and hear and know and come to find peace with the God who is forever. For we ask it in his name. Amen. Amen. Foreverbug and angelic and Omega un un un un un un un