

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
May 8, 2022

Title: Abraham's Test

Subject: God, Abraham, Isaac, Faith, Love, Submission, Loyalty, Grace, Sin, Life, Journey.

Theme Text: Hebrews 11:17-18 (ESV) ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

Theme Illustration: Our Text as well as many others informs us that God does indeed test our faith. He does not tempt us to sin, James 1:13, but if He tested His Divine Son in the desert, we can be assured that we are not above the testing of our faith. God does not test us to find out what we would do. He is not searching for answers. God tests those who already belong to Him to strengthen them. Those tests are proof that we are one of His sons. We are even commanded to count it all joy! **James 1:2-4 (ESV) ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.** Testing is an integral part of the sanctifying process, the road to perfection. God knows those who trust Him enough to at least attempt to obey. Let's get down to basics here, the fruit of faith is both the desire and our meager attempts at obedience.

We also know that God's laws and commands are perfect. We know that the only thing that meets God's standard is perfect obedience. Therefore, if perfect obedience is required, how can any one of us pass or grow from these tests? Remember, we have a savior that has obeyed perfectly and has gifted his true followers the gift of His perfection. So, what is God looking for? He is looking for our desire to obey and our attempts to obey, trusting in

His grace and not ourselves, to produce faithful servants, willing to do His bidding and through that become what God has already decreed what we will be, images of Christ.

Read: Hebrews 11:17-19

Introduction: This test of Abraham's obedience no doubt is the second greatest testing in the Bible exceeded only by the test laid upon the Lord Jesus. This status rests upon the stakes involved because the existence of the incarnate Lord is hanging in the balance and all of the promises that God gave to Abraham. Also hanging in the balance is every New Testament believer and the church. Remember that Abraham is the father of all true believers, both natural and supernatural, Romans 4.16. We remember that the Lord gave Abram a command while he was living in Chaldea to leave and go to the land where God will lead him. As a part of this command is the giving of a promise to this man to make him into a great nation and through him, the entire world will be blessed. Abram and Sarah were childless. We are aware of Abram's attempt to keep God's promise by having a child through Hagar, Sarah's maid. That resulted in Ishmael.

I have told you that each believer since has had to walk Abraham's path. Three aspects of Abraham's faith are developed in verses 8 through 19. First, we have Abram leaving his native land at the call of God, then the manner of Abram's life living in tents, refusing to go back, and the offering up of Isaac. These depict three phases. The first depicts conversion, the second depicts the life of faith, and the third the consummation or perfection of His faith.

And as we know, this account is a most blessed foreshadowing of the love and grace of God in the gift of His Son.

Transition: Abraham's test was a three-level test. First, it was:

1. A Test of Submission: Hebrews 11:17-19 (ESV) ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was

said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

It was the Lord Jesus who reminded us that it is not those who say, Lord, Lord, but only those who do His will. Who will be saved, Matthew 7:21? We need to refer back to Genesis 22, which was our Scripture reading for the details referenced here.

We are told that Abraham offered up his son Isaac at the command of God. We see the immediate difficulty. God has laid down a law after the flood against the shedding of blood, Genesis 9:5 – 6. By His own command, the Lord give a command to Abraham to do what was a sin for a human being.

We must also notice that the text says that Abraham offered up Isaac. We also know that Abraham did not slay him. This tells us that in God’s eyes. Abraham did slay Isaac. God accepted Abraham’s will or desire to obey as the deed itself. There was no reservation in Abraham’s heart. This is evident when reading the text in Genesis 22, which details the preparations that Abraham made to carry out God’s command.

This is an extremely important application for Christians. The terms of God’s law have not changed. God requires of us a personal, continuing, and perfect obedience. Thus, we are spiritually incapable to render to Him in our present condition. For Christ's sake, where the heart truly desires to fully please Him and makes an honest attempt to do so, God graciously accepts our will and desire to obey as the perfect obedience He requires. All of this is made possible by God’s grace through faith in Christ. Thus, receiving Christ’s perfect obedience through the gift of imputed righteousness satisfies God’s requirements. There is no fooling God on this matter. Two other texts support this, 2 Corinthians 8:12 and Hebrews 13:18.

Thus, according to the Scriptures, Abraham offered up Isaac. I also repeat that the testing of believers is not to provide God with knowledge but for our knowledge. This test was a test of Abraham's submission to God. Many find the fact that God tested Abraham after Abraham did follow God’s command

you to part his homeland. So we have here a test upon test. God determined to test Abraham's loyalty. Remember, that Job experienced three distinct tests. By doing so, the Lord also tested his faith.

Transition: Abraham's test was also:

A Test of Love: Hebrews 11:17-18 (ESV) ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ **of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."** ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

In calling upon Abraham to sacrifice his son, the Lord submitted his faith to a fiery ordeal of love. God's promise to Abraham centered on Isaac. God had made promises to Abraham concerning his seed or offspring. In commanding Abraham to offer up his son, it appeared to the carnal mind that God was going back on His promises. Ishmael had been sent away. At this point, Isaac was also childless, thus to kill him would be to end all hopes. To sacrifice his son and heir was contrary to his natural affection. Both Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac. But notice in the Genesis text, that Abraham in obedience never consulted Sarah. He did not need another opinion. This also was contrary to reason.

In such a manner, God tests His people today. He calls us to obedience, which is contrary to our natural affections and against reason. To deny self later would be central teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 16:24. We're faced many times with tests that inform us, which is the stronger love. This is always the choice before us, **2 Corinthians 6:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷

Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you. Which is the stronger affection, unbelieving friends, or God? We can therefore expect our greatest test to be about our stronger affections.

As God's children grow in grace, harder tests are assigned to us, deeper waters are to be traversed. We are not to be afraid of increased opportunities

to manifest our faith. It is not strange or a sign of our sinful disobedience that God appoints harder tests that He did years ago.

We need to seek God's grace so that we might be enabled to pass the test to benefit from these tests. We will through these tests finally learn, **Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ **If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.** ² **Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. This command is not a pie-in-the-sky request. It is a command.**

Should we not also as an application from this text calmly anticipate these trials or tests and thus be less likely to be staggered by them, **1 Peter 4:12 (ESV)** ¹² **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.**

Transition: Lastly, we encounter:

3. A Test of Trust: Hebrews 11:17-19 (ESV) ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹ **He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.**

In being called to offer up Isaac, Abraham seems to be called to destroy and cut off his family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, to sacrifice his soul, and his hope of salvation while cutting off the Church of God. If Isaac was slain, then all would be lost! Why would God test this patriarch thusly?

The testing for Abraham's sake, was so that he might better know the efficacy of the grace that God lavished upon him. The suspending of a heavy weight on a chain does test the chain and reveals any weak link.

God places His people in varied circumstances which manifest the states of their hearts, whether or not our trust is really in Him. God tested Job so that even though God might slay him, he would trust God.

God tests His people today to test the grace He has placed in our hearts for His glory and our comfort. The Lord is determined to make it for all to see that He has on earth, a people who will forsake any comfort and endure misery rather than refuse our duty to him. These are people who love him better than our own lives and are prepared to trust Him in the dark. We never have clearer proof of the reality of grace than when we are being tested.

Abraham closed his eyes to all difficulties encountered on the promises and power of God, who cannot lie. Abraham didn't know how, didn't ask God why or how, he simply, **Genesis 22:3 (ESV)** 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.**

How are we to account for Abraham's actions? The word of God gives us the answer, say! Not theoretical faith but real living faith. In essence, God did not physically raise Isaac. He was fully sure that God would work a miracle rather than fail His promises.

Conclusion: The character of spiritual faith is that persuades and assures the soul of God's supremacy over all things, His infallible wisdom, righteousness, infinite love, and the Almighty power to accomplish everything he promises. That is why the person of faith counts it pure joy. Our faith is more precious than we can imagine.

We should pray that God would give us the desire to obey. We should cry out, Lord have mercy on me and my vile unbelief! Subdue its power. Be pleased Lord to work in us that supernatural faith that will honor you and bring you glory.