

The Life of Abraham: A Journey of Faith – Part 13

Times of Testing – Genesis 22:1-19

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 3rd, 2022

Intro:

- We are nearing the end of our journey with Abraham. Hopefully, his faith journey has been helpful and illuminating in your faith journey. We all owe a debt of thanks for God's interaction with them and His recording of their lives for us in His book.
- We have seen this couples' calling and response, both good and bad, as they interact with God, each other, and His creation. I am grateful that we have both the good and the bad recorded because our lives are also a mixture. They have passed and failed tests, just like us, and just like us, reaped both the benefits and consequences of their actions.
- This morning we will look at the account of the final exam while they are on earth, and from this passage, we will learn about God, His interaction with us, and truths that can transform our lives and affect our eternity.

Know God will test you

Gen 22:1a NIV

Some time later God tested Abraham.

- We know that at this time, Abraham had been walking with God for at least 30 years. Abraham had now received the promised child, a miracle for both him and Sarah. They had chosen to settle down in the land of promise, and they had “set their roots” down in the land of His promise.
- Now, after they had made these choices, “some time later” God tested Abraham. Tests are all over the Bible. God tests His people numerous times (Ex 16:4, Ex. 20:20, Dt. 6:16, I Ch 29:17). God invites us to test Him on his word (Mal. 3:10). Jesus tested His disciples (John 6:6). The apostles test the churches (2 Cor. 2:9, 2 Cor 8:2). We are told to “test ourselves” (2 Cor. 13:5-7, Gal. 6:4) and test the spirits (1 John 4:1). We are to “test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Th 5:21). We are blessed when we remain steadfast under trials, and the one who has stood the test will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him (James 1:12). At the end, our lives will be tested through fire (1 Cor 3:13).
- Tests are a normal part of life in relationships with others and God. Know that they are coming, and know that you will face them. Don't be afraid, but be prepared. Also, know that **when God tests us, He either proves us or improves us. His tests are not for our destruction but for our instruction.** Know that at times God will test us. Don't be surprised but rise to meet Him in these moments.

Gen 22:1b-2 NIV

He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. 2 Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

- This was Abraham's last major final exam. Abraham's first test in Genesis 12 was a test to see if Abraham was willing to let go of his past and what was familiar to him for the promise of what God said that He would give him. It was about letting go of his past to gain a better future.
- This last test was not a test about faith to receive something. This is a test about faith to sacrifice something. This was not a test about trusting a promise you have yet to receive. This is a test about giving up something that you have already received. This is not walking toward something; this is about walking away from someone you love. Can you walk away from something because you love God more? Do you love God because of what He can give you or because of who you are?
- This was the same type of test that Job had to take. All of God's angels were presenting themselves to God, and Satan came along among them. God told Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" (Job 1:8-9 ESV). And then the accusation from the Devil is that Job only loved God because God blessed him. And if God took away everything, then Job would not love or fear or obey Him any longer. So God said, okay, take it all away, and we will see. And the rest of the book of Job talks about this, why it happened. Job withstands the testing, continues His faith in God, and God returns His blessing on him.
- This is the right question for us as well. Do you love God because you love Him, or do you only love Him because of what He gives to you (rich and famous people ask these kinds of questions as well)? Jesus asked this same question of Peter, "Peter do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15). We are also told by Jesus that if we love any person more than Him, even our own lives, we are not worthy of Him. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matt. 10. 34-39).
- This is a test you will have to face in your life, and this is a test that Abraham was facing with even greater theological and eternal implications than we have because of the significance of the promises that were given to him and his descendants. He was asked if he would be willing to sacrifice it all because of his love for God.

Gen 22:2-5 NIV

Early the next morning Abraham got up and 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. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 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."

- When times of testing come, get up, get ready, and get to it. These are what I call "OTO's," opportunities to overcome. This is not a knee-jerk emotional reaction to a situation. This is a "long obedience in the same direction" decision. This was a three-day journey during which he had to think about things and had time to stop and turn around.
- In these verses, there is a huge statement about Abraham and what he thought was going to happen. Did you notice it? Abraham said to his two servants, "We will worship, and then WE will come back to you." Abraham fully believed that both he and Isaac would be returning. He trusted God to intervene in this sacrifice so that God would fulfill His word to him.
- We gain further insight into what Abraham was thinking at this moment from the book of Hebrews, where it says:

Heb 11:17-20 ESV

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.

- At this point in his faith growing process, Abraham had matured to the point of believing and obeying God in and with everything, even to the point of giving what was most precious back to God. He knew God so well and trusted that He would keep his word, that he believed that even if Isaac was killed, God would be able to raise him to life again.
- Abraham had grown a long way from where he was at the beginning. He lied and was afraid for his own life. Now, he learned to trust God even with his own life and the life of His promised son. **Faith grows by the foot, by placing one foot in front of another in your walk with God.**
- Know that God will test you, and it is for your good. It is to prove you or improve you. Keep adding one faithful step to another, and you will continue to change and be proved into His likeness. Know along the way that God will provide for you.

Know that God will provide for you

Gen 22:6-8 NIV

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8 Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

- Isaac knew they were going to worship the Lord. He knew what was needed to do so. As he took an assessment of their supplies, he noticed that they were lacking one important and vital element, the sacrifice. So he asked his father, “where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham profoundly replied, “God himself will provide the lamb.” **God always gives to us what He requires of us.** And this interaction and prophetic statement pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of God, providing the Lamb of God, His only begotten Son, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Phil 2:13 NIV

It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

- God is the one who is working in you, to give you the desire to do His good purpose and give you the power to do His good purpose. Anytime you see even the desire in you to do what is right and good, that is from God. Also, anytime you act to do His good purpose, it is God who is working inside of you. He will call you to follow Him and give you the strength to follow Him. He will never abandon you, but will empower you to do what He has called you to do—every single time. You are not alone, for He is with you, with each and every footfall along the path.

Gen 22:9-12 NIV

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. 12 “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’s faith and love for God were proved genuine by his actions. God knew what he would do, and this was proved by and in what he did. This is where his faith and his actions moved in one accord. His action was proof of his faith. This is why James points to this incident in this way:

James 2:22-24 ESV

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

- Our faith is completed and confirmed by what we do, our works. God knew this and then proved it by what he asked of Abraham. Once the test was given and passed, the provision of the Lord appeared. What was already planned and provided for was seen at just the right time.

Gen 22:13-14 NIV

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

- This is where we first hear of one of the names of God, “Jehovah Jireh” – God will provide. Remember that God will provide for you, and God is enough for you. The phrase “on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided” is significant. Do you remember what mountains they were on? They were on the mountains of Moriah. Do you know where the mountain of Moriah is? There is one other place in the Bible where Mt. Moriah was mentioned, and it is 2 Chronicles 3:1

2 Chron 3:1 ESV

Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

- Mt. Moriah is where the temple was eventually built. It is also the place where David stopped a plague on the people of God by making atonement from for them, saying, “I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” (2 Sam 24). And on the same mountain is Golgotha, the place where the Lamb of God was crucified. This whole incident pointed to the final fulfillment where the children of the promise, the children of God, would be saved by the Lamb of God that was provided by God. “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” All of

this points to Christ. This is where the theological term of “Substitutionary atonement” comes from, where one thing is substituted to atone (by payback for) the other.

- You can see this playing out in God claiming the “firstborn” for himself. There always needed to be a ransom for the firstborn. We as God’s children are called His “firstborn” collectively as we are saved by his “firstborn Son.” This theme is embedded in the theology of the Bible.

Know that God will keep His word to you

Gen 22:15-19 NIV

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

- In connection to His promise based upon the faithfulness and fulfillment of the covenant, God will always keep His word. This is the seventh and final time this promise is proclaimed to Abraham. Abraham was obedient and followed the leading of the Lord. He was proved faithful, and even though there were missteps and mistakes along the way, he continued to move forward in His journey of faith. His life pointed to the life and love of Christ. In your and my journey of faith, we need to keep moving forward, even and especially after missteps, to continue to give ourselves to the faithful one. He will keep His promises to us as well.

Conclusion and Communion

- Next week we will conclude the story and conclude our series on the life of Abraham. Again know from this week that God will test us, and we are to test, and we will face tests of many kinds. Know the tests will prove us or improve us. God will give you what is needed, and He gives to us what is required of us. So continue to entrust your life to Him, knowing that He is always faithful to fulfill His word.
- The service will conclude with a time of communion and prayer.