

Genesis 22:1-24

Luke 14 (Vs 25-33)

“Triumphant Faith In Times Of Testing”

Think about what it is in this life that matters most *to you*. Would you still love God if He took that *from* you? Think it through. Why do you serve God? Is because of what He can do *for* you, or because of Who He’s become *to* you, the great love that He’s poured out *upon* you? Jesus said (Luke 14:25-33).

In other words, if you began to follow J.C. because you thought it would make your life easier, you couldn’t have been more wrong. If you’re looking for the easy way in this life stay as far away from Jesus as you possibly can. He never sought to promote the false presupposition that following Him would be the easy way. He *did* say that He was the *only* way, but He *never* said that He was the *easy* way. He said, “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*”¹ When it comes to following J.C. it’s imperative that you ensure that the resolve of your heart is that He is the highest priority that you have; over *anything* & over *anyone*, that you have counted the cost & that you will submit your life to Him no matter what.

You’re not in this because you think He might make you rich, or take away all your problems but because God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. It’s not so much about what He *can do* as it is about what He *has done*. “Well if God loved me He would..., if He loved me He would...” I’ll tell you what God would do if He loved you. He would send His only begotten Son to bear the weight of all your sin, all your guilt, all your shame & He would shed His blood, & die in your place so that through faith in Him you would never perish but have everlasting life. I’m not trying to tell you that God isn’t concerned for temporary things, but what I am telling you is that His priority pertains to eternity, not to that which is temporary.

One day Satan came before God & he had set his sights on a man named Job. God said, “You’ve been considering Job, huh? There’s none like him on the face of the earth, a blameless & upright man, fears God & hates evil.” Satan said, “Of course he does, You’ve hedged him about, blessed the work of his hands, given him all kinds of possessions, take those things from him & he’ll curse You to Your face.” “He’s in it for the bennies, You’ve made him rich, he has life on easy street, if that weren’t the case he’d curse You to Your face.” God said, “Do what you want, but don’t touch his life.”

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 7:13-14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So Satan took everything from him, his livestock, his servants, his children, it kept going from bad to worse, he broke out in boils, dogs were licking his sores... even his friends (who were supposed to be there to comfort him) began to accuse him of some sort of sin that God must've been judging him for. Do you remember the resolve of Job's heart? It's found in the 15th Vs of the 13th Ch. **"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Job 13:15**

He who loses his life for Christ's sake will find it & he who seek's to save his life will lose it. Ch 22 of the book of Genesis brings us to mount Moriah; it would represent the farthest reaches of faith, the highest possible pinnacle of *sacrifice* for Abraham & the highest possible pinnacle of *surrender* for Isaac. God would ask Abraham to give to Him that which mattered more than anything else in his life (his only son) & in so doing we would be granted a beautiful picture of the Father giving to us *His* only begotten Son to be the sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Vs 1-2

"Wait, what? After all these years of waiting, hoping, trusting; the promise that You would give me a son & through the work You'd do in my life all the families of the earth would be blessed, now You want me to take the son You've given me & lay down his life before You in sacrifice?" It's like, "Have you changed Your mind, are You revoking the promise, this doesn't make sense..."

Look back at Vs 1, "Now it came to pass *after these things...*" After what things? After all the tests & trials of his life up to this point. He'd passed the "family" test when he was called out of Ur, but he failed the "famine" test when he went down to Egypt. Once he got back to the land of Promise he passed the "fellowship" test when he gave Lot 1st choice of the land, then he passed the "fight" test, defeating the kings that came against Sodom, & he passed the "fortune" test when he refused to take the wealth of Sodom. **But he failed the "fatherhood" test when being impatient w/the promise, he & Sarah sought to help God fulfill it through Hagar, yet he did pass the "farewell" test when it came time to send Ishmael away. Here's the point, each of the previous trials/tests in the past was preparing him for this test in the present.**

How many of you realize that the things God has brought you through in the past He uses to prepare you for what you're to face in the present? God will bring a test, or perhaps allow a trial not always to show us how weak we are, but to prove out your faith & His faithfulness. In times of testing both your faith & God's faithfulness will be on display.

Now if you have a KJV it reads that God "tempted" Abraham, not a good translation.

The bible is clear that God “tempts” no man. Temptation comes from w/in, it’s when we long to fulfill some sinful desire in our own members. Could be to steal, could be to lash out in anger, could be something sexual, you get the idea. James put it like this, *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”*² So let’s make it clear that though *testing* comes from God, *temptation* never will. Now not every difficulty is necessarily a test either, tough times are apart of life. However, regardless we want to learn to navigate life in a manner that honors God so that be it a test or simply a tough time in life our aim is the same, to glorify God.

Couple things that might help you distinguish between temptation & testing is that often times temptation can seem logical, as to where a test might seem completely unreasonable. Why would God give Abraham a son & then ask him to kill him? What’s the rationale there? On the surface it doesn’t seem to make sense... **Another thing is that temptations are common to all men (we face similar temptations), tests, however can be completely unique. God never asked Lot to face the test that Abraham faced. Why? Because Lot wasn’t where Abraham was at spiritually, he didn’t come to this place of maturity. So when God sends you a test, (as James said) count it all joy, why? Because it shows that you’re growing & God is promoting you spiritually in the school of faith.**

But notice that Abraham is over 100 yrs old & God is still bringing him through “soul-stretching” experiences. Listen, we’re never too old to face new challenges, fight new battles & learn new truths. One has said that when we stop learning, we stop growing; & when we stop growing, we stop living. Just because we may be getting older *physically* that doesn’t mean that God wants us to stop growing *spiritually*.

“Take now your son, your *only* son Isaac, whom you love, & go to the land or Moriah, & offer him as a burnt offering...” Wait, what do you mean, “your *only* son Isaac”, what about Ishmael? Interesting isn’t it? Ishmael was a product of the work of Abraham’s flesh, the byproduct of his own efforts; God doesn’t even acknowledge it. Listen to me, God will *never* acknowledge the efforts of our flesh in seeking to bring to pass His work. Write it down, look it up later 1 Cor 3:9-15. Those things we do in the flesh (perhaps even a right move, but a wrong motive) will burn, God refused to acknowledge the effort of our flesh in bringing to pass His work... Jesus said that many will come to Him on that day; “Didn’t we cast out demons in your name, perform miracles & prophecy!”

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Jas 1:13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness; I never knew you!” Seeking to do His work in the efforts of the flesh.

As far as God was concerned Abraham had 1 son, the son of promise...Isaac. Of course this begins the “type” doesn’t it? The picture of Christ as seen in Isaac’s life, in the volume of the book it’s written *of revolves around & points to J.C.* This is a foreshadow of what Jesus fulfills.

Consider the foreshadow of Jesus that’s found in Isaac: both were specially promised sons, both were born after a period of delay after the promise, both mothers were assured of God’s omnipotence, both were given names rich w/meaning before they were born, both were born at the “set time”, both births were miraculous & both births were accompanied by joy. **Still yet in this Ch we’ll see both were loved of their father, both carried the wood of their “altar” of sacrifice, both offered themselves willingly, both were sacrificed on the same hill & both were delivered from death on the 3rd day.**

I want you to notice that here in Vs 2 in the 1st mention of “love” in your bible. & The context is that of a father’s love for his son, in connection w/the sacrifice of his son. Now that’s not to say that mom’s don’t love their sons equally, but remember this is a foreshadow of the Father’s love for J.C. “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” God is directing every detail of this drama.

Vs 3

This Vs blows my mind. If I were Abraham I would’ve done everything in my power to sleep in (as if he slept at all). But I’d have been hitting snooze on my alarm, maybe I’d have fallen suddenly “ill” so that I couldn’t leave home; *anything* to delay the anguish of obedience... but Abraham rose “early in the morning”. His obedience was immediate & it was complete. He even split the wood himself...

Abraham had learned something of the character of God & that was this; He was not a man that He should lie. God made him a promise & even if he didn’t understand what was going on or how it would work out He was going to trust in the Lord w/all his heart & lean not on his own understanding. **We don’t need all the details if we have God’s command, it’s not about understanding as much as it is about obeying, believing God’s promises. Abraham didn’t debate God, He didn’t dispute w/God, He just obeyed God. Because faith doesn’t demand explanations; it rests on promises.**

If you desire to grow in your relationship w/God don’t always look for the easy way out, look for the obedient way out.

Notice there's not a line in here about how Abraham felt about all this, that's because he's not allowing his feeling to lead him. He's walking by faith, not by feelings. I'm sure he felt sick in his heart, wasn't sure what was going on or why it was happening, he was like you are & I am. But he'd resolved in his heart to trust the Lord.

One has said, "Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible." Again take note; Abraham didn't know where, he didn't know when, he didn't know how & he didn't know why... but he did know Who & that makes all the difference. Because I know that God will keep His word, that He's for me & not against me, is working all things together for my eternal good & His eternal glory; therefore I'm at rest in trusting Him fully.

Vs 4-8

As far as Abraham was concerned Isaac was dead the moment God told him to offer him as a sacrifice, now here we are 3 days later & God reveals to him the mount upon which he's to offer his son.

Now in Vs 5 we see a staggering profession of faith, did you catch it? Abraham left the 2 servants behind & said to them, "...the lad & I will go yonder & worship, & we will come back to you." "Wait a minute Abe, do think God is bluffing here? You think maybe He's just kidding around?" No. All he knows is that God promised him that through Isaac his seed would be called. Therefore He knows that God will do whatever it takes to fulfill that promise, even raising him from the dead if necessary. Even though to this point there's been no one raised from the dead, he knows that nothing is too hard for the Lord (18:14). The writer of Hebrews said this, "*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*"³ In other words Abraham had already experienced resurrection power when God moved in his body & Sarah's body enabling them to have Isaac in the 1st place. So Abraham concluded that if God could grant life to Isaac miraculously once, than He could do it again.

Here's something else interesting. This is the 1st mention (Vs 5) of the word "worship" in your bible. Now when we think of "worship" we generally associate that word w/singing emotionally moving songs. & It's true that our songs can be as incense to the throne of God.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Heb 11:17-19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

However I want you to notice that for Abraham the idea of worship wasn't connected to a *song*, it was connected to a *sacrifice*. You might jot down 1 Chron 21:18-28. You'll find David buying a threshing floor to build an altar, the guy tried to give it to him but he refused & insisted on the full price because he wouldn't offer what was someone else's to the Lord as though it came from him nor would he sacrifice to the Lord w/that which cost him nothing. He realized that somewhere in there that true worship would involve sacrifice, it would cost him something. If it doesn't cost anything, how can it mean anything? So to w/Abraham, he & Isaac would go to worship God, to bow down before God in sacrifice.

"& the 2 of them went together" (Vs 6) meaning that father & son were in agreement w/one another. Now in Vs 7 Isaac is noticing something... he's all "Uh dad, I see we have the wood, the knife, the fire... where's the lamb?" Underline Vs 8 (we'll come back to it), "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." "So the 2 of them went together" Isaac went willingly & knowingly w/his dad.

Vs 9

I want you to realize something here & that is this; Isaac wasn't a little toddler here just ignorantly allowing his dad to do whatever to him. We know that he was old enough to carry all the wood up the hillside & next time we see him he'll be 40 (receiving his wife). He may've been 20-30 yrs old (give or take) all the word "lad" means is that he wasn't married yet. Here's the point, his dad was over 100 yrs old, Isaac could've easily overpowered him & chose to not do this. But he was willing to submit to his father, even to the point of death.

Even so we know that Jesus could've avoided the cross had he truly wanted to. He told Peter (when Peter tried to protect Him when he cut off that guys ear there in the garden), "Don't you think that I could pray to My Father, & He would provide Me w/more than 12 legions of angels?" But Jesus wasn't there to do His own will, but rather He would submit to His Fathers will to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:8).

Vs 10-14

What shall be provided? The substitutionary sacrifice, & in the mount of the Lord it has been provided. Remember back in Vs 8? "My son, God will provide for Himself a lamb..." It's real interesting that in the Hebrew the word "for" isn't in the text, it was added by the translators to clarify the text but in this case it confused the text.

The Hebrew says, “God will provide *Himself* the lamb for a burnt offering.”

Yet when you get to Vs 13 it's not a lamb, it's a ram. Question; where's the lamb? Flash forward some 19 centuries & there he is, J.B. preaching, preparing the way of the Lord & he looks out over the crowd & sees Jesus making His way through them & there he declares; **“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”**⁴ Peter said that you weren't redeemed w/corruptible things like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct, but w/the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb w/out blemish & w/out spot. Write it down & look it up Rev 5:6-10. J.C. is the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world & has redeemed us to God by His blood.

Now... here in Vs 11-12 we find the Angel of the Lord preventing Abraham from going through w/the sacrifice. Abraham had shown that he was willing to do whatever God would require of him, that he trusted God no matter what. Even though he was stopped just prior to actually going through w/it we realize that God often times takes the will of a man for the deed of the man. That's why Jesus said that if we even look on another w/lust in our heart than we're guilty of adultery before God, because we've committed the act in our heart. God always looks to the heart.

But I think this is important to see, faith was working together w/works here. God knew Abraham's heart, but no one else did. How would they know that Abraham truly trusted God in this? By his works. So to w/you & so to w/me. The bible declares (James 2:20&26) that faith w/out works is dead. You can tell me you have faith, but if there's no fruit of that in your life, than you can tell me all you want, it's not genuine. Perhaps you've heard it like this, “Works won't save, but saving faith will work.” The only way I know that you trust God is by the fruit (or works) it produces in your life.

God will test you, & He will test me, & it will demonstrate both your faith & His faithfulness... We also see here that God does not approve of human sacrifice; He w/held Abraham from offering his only son.

Abraham displayed his heart toward God in being willing to give up his only son. Even so God the Father displays His heart toward us in that He willingly gave His only begotten Son. He spared Abraham's son, but would not spare His own. The bible declares (Rom 8:32) that God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

& Abraham named the place “Jehovah Jireh” the Lord will provide, or will see to it.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 1:29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God would see to it that the substitutionary sacrifice (for the sin of the world) would happen on that mount. What a declaration of faith... So Abraham received his son (as it were) back alive on this the 3rd day.

Vs 15-19

God reaffirms His promise. Now check this out, even though it's assumed in the text that Isaac returned w/Abraham, the Holy Spirit has edited the text in such a way as to draw no attention to that. Isaac isn't mentioned here in returning w/Abraham. Why is that? Look at Vs 20.

Vs 20-24

This sorta seems weird to be thrown in here doesn't it? But check this out; after the sacrifice Isaac isn't seen again until Ch 24 when he's receiving his bride... Rebekah. We read of her birth here in Vs 23. **Even so after Jesus was sacrificed upon the altar of the cross He's no longer w/us physically, but what happened after the cross? His bride (the church) was birthed, & we won't see Him again until that union takes place whereby He receives His bride unto Himself.**

Listen, I don't know what test, what trial may be upon you today. But let me encourage you, trust in the Lord w/all your heart & lean not on your own understanding. Obedient faith will triumph over trials; because you may not know where, you may not know when, you may not know why, & you may not know how, but you know Who, & that makes all the difference. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God, Thank You for reminding us who You are again today. You are the God who has loved us & given Your only begotten Son for us that He might pay the penalty for our sin. You are faithful to Your word, You keep Your promises & we give You praise. Help us to trust in You, You are worthy of our very best. May our faith be evident by the fruit that comes forth from our lives & Lord J.C. we look forward to uniting w/You face to face to be together w/You forever.

If you're not sure that you would be w/the Lord because you've not given your heart to the Lord than I want to give you that opportunity right now. **God may've spared Abraham's son, but He didn't spare His own, but delivered Him up for us all.** Though previously your heart may've been against Him, His was for you & so He sent Christ to die for you that you (through faith in Him) would never perish but have everlasting life. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.