

Tested Faith (Hebrews 11:17–22)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (7/9/2017)

Introduction

1. . A. W. Pink lists 4 characteristics of faith that makes it “the power influence” that can “support the [tested] soul and carry it through” (*Commentary on Hebrews*, vol. II, pp. 249, 250).
 - a. Faith rightly judges all things, being a spiritual prudence (wisdom) whereby the faithful is able to choose that which has true value (Psa. 63:3).
 - b. Faith resolves difficulties when a dilemma presents itself, seeing the faithfulness of God to His purpose as paramount to all seemingly contrary issues (2 Cor. 10:5).
 - c. Faith is grace-based, looking to the reality of future things and, in light of their reality, giving the faithful reason to endure the hardest of trials (2 Cor. 4:17, 18).
 - d. Faith “*works by love*” (Gal. 5:6) and, thus, seeks to glorify God even when doing so requires giving up something near and dear to us.

The truth set forth in our text is this: God is worth infinitely more than all we could give to Him, particularly in light of the fact that He gave Christ for us.

2. The offering of Isaac referred to in vv. 17–19 is the last word of God to Abraham (Gen. 22). Compare God’s first word to Abram (Gen. 12). Will Abraham trust God?
 - a. “*Go from your country*” (12:1, an unspecified direction). – “*Go to the land of Moriah*” (22:1, a specified direction).
 - b. “*I will make of you a great nation*” (12:1, the promise of hope). – “*Take your son, your only son Isaac . . . and offer him there as a burnt offering*” (22:2; the promise confused).
 - c. “*Go . . . to a land that I will show you*” (12:1; guidance assured). – “*Go . . . to one of the mountains that I will show you*” (22:2; guidance continued).
 - d. “*So Abram went, as the Lord had told him*” (12:3; obedience begun). – “*So Abraham . . . went to the place of which God had told him*” (22:4; obedience matured).

I. Obedient Faith

1. Abraham obeyed when he was called to leave his home (v. 8); Abraham obeyed when called to offer Isaac (v. 17).
 - a. The purpose for these statements is to demonstrate that true faith is *obedient* faith (Rom. 4:19–21).
 - b. God’s purpose is to reestablish righteousness in the earth (Jer. 9:24; 2 Pet. 3:13), and He will accomplish this through a people called out to walk by faith.
2. Faith is the gracious work of God for the purpose of restoring righteousness on earth.
 - a. This gracious work is a *process*, taking a sinner (Ecc. 7:20), saving him, then developing faith through trial and testing (Psa. 7:9; Prov. 10:25; James 1:2–4).
 - b. This faith work will succeed, as clearly demonstrated in Abraham (Gen. 22:7–14), because God will accomplish all His purpose (Prov. 19:21; Isa. 14:24; 46:6). He will not fail.

II. God’s Purpose Stated

1. Abraham came to understand that what God promised was dependent on Isaac’s progeny (v. 17).
 - a. God’s purpose was clearly stated: “*Through Isaac shall your offspring be named*” (v. 18; Gen. 21:12).

- b. Thus God's stated purpose and command to offer Isaac as burnt offering created a dilemma for Abraham.
- c. However complicated, one fact stands uncontested: God *commanded* Abraham to offer Isaac.
- d. How would you respond in this situation?
 - 1) Faith requires us to yield to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13) whether we understand or not.
 - 2) Faith understands that God has the right to demand anything He pleases from us (1 Chron. 29:11, 14).
- 2. Abraham's faith led him to believe that God would fulfill the promise through Isaac, even if Abraham offered him on the altar (v. 19).
 - a. This is not blind faith but informed faith.
 - b. Tragically, many "believers" want to follow God on their own terms and call it "living by faith," something Paul warned of in 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Prov. 15:14.

What This Means for Us

1. Do you really trust God?
2. Do you recognize the work of faith in your trials and testing?
3. Do you recognize that God's working of faith in you demands that you relinquish all to Him, especially the things that you may cherish most?
4. Do you long for the reward of faith to be fulfilled for you even if it must wait until the eternal state?