

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #51

Genesis 22:1-14

How does one literally prove he loves and trusts God? The answer is by obeying God's Word regardless of the sacrificial cost. **You are NEVER too old to face new faith challenges, faith battles and new faith growth.** Abraham was well over 100 when this major test of his faith took place.

ONE WHO WILL BE GREATLY BLESSED BY GOD IS ONE WHO LOVES GOD AND HAS FAITH IN GOD AND PROVES IT BY HIS OBEDIENCE.

OBSERVABLE ACTION #1 - God tests the believer. 22:1-2

There are three words that show up for the first time in the Bible in this chapter: 1) Test (22:1), 2) Love (22:2) and 3) Obey (22:18). If we combine these three words we may conclude that God gives a test to determine whether or not Abraham loves God and trusts God to the point of obedience that demands great personal sacrifice.

The Hebrew word "test" has as its basic meaning to try or prove something by some sort of trial. But this particular word also carries with it the idea of testing something **not by touch** but by smell. The theological point is that **a tested proving is not one that comes by sight or touch but by faith** (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 552).

Specific Detail #1 - The time of the test. 22:1a

This test came about "after these things." This little prepositional phrase is critical to the narrative because it informs us that Abraham was not tested until he had blossomed to the point where by faith he could handle this level of test. **This test is not given to a novice but to one who is seasoned in his faith.**

As Mr. Calvin said this phrase refers to all the events of Abraham's life that tossed him up and down (John Calvin, *Genesis*, p. 560). This test of Abraham's faith did not come until he had been well-groomed for it.

Specific Detail #2 - The source of the test. 22:1b

The source of this test is clearly stated to be God. **Behind every test, every trial, every trouble that comes into the life of a believer is the Sovereignty of God.** God not only permits negative things to come into the life of the believer, at times He Himself actually ordains them. There is a clear distinction between what is revealed here and what is revealed in James 1:13 which says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.'" **The difference is that God can not tempt a person to do evil, lustful things (James 1:13), but He will test a person to prove whether or not he will obey.**

Specific Detail #3 - The specifics of the test. 22:2

The test that God was giving to Abraham, the one who would produce a line through whom God's Own Son would come, was the test of a father to sacrifice his own son.

(Fact #1) - The person to be sacrificed. 22:2a

The person to be sacrificed was Isaac . God brings out three realities about Isaac to Abraham:

Reality #1 - Isaac is your son.

Reality #2 - Isaac is your only son - only son of promise.

Reality #3 - Isaac is your loved son - word “love” means to desire something, to breathe after it.

For Abraham, this request to sacrifice his only loved son goes against your natural feelings, your natural reason and it goes against your lifelong hope.

This request of God sits in the historical background of many godless societies who were known for this specific activity. The O.T. is clear that this custom of sacrificing a child to some “god” was practiced by many neighbors of Israel. For example, the Canaanites were known for this practice (Psalm 106:38), the Moabites were known for this practice (II Kings 3:27) as well as several other nations (II Kings 17:29-31). This practice was eventually clearly forbidden in the law of God (Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10). However, in spite of the fact if that it was forbidden by God, there were times in Israel’s and Judah’s history where they participated in this terrible practice (Psalm 106:38; Jeremiah 19:5; Ezekiel 16:20-21). **As we look carefully to the outcome of this test, what we learn is that God was not interested in the blood of Isaac, but He was testing the faith of Abraham.** This test in this historical setting proves whether or not Abraham is devoted to the true God as much as heathens are devoted to their false gods.

(Fact #2) - The place of the sacrifice. 22:2b

God required that this sacrifice be made at a specific mountain spot in the land of Moriah. This spot was a three day trip from Beersheba (22:3-4), which means Abraham had three days to change his mind about this costly sacrifice and turn around and go home. But he didn’t. He traveled all the way to Mt. Moriah.

This can be, as Dr. Merrill Unger says, none other than the mountain top on which the Temple of Jerusalem eventually stood (II Chronicles 3:1) (Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the O.T.*, Vol. 1, p. 71). In fact, tradition holds that this “Mount Moriah” is the exact place occupied by the Dome of the Rock, the Muslim mosque that was built in A.D. 691 (*NIV Study Bible*, p. 38). One thing clearly seen here is that the place of acceptable worship is determined by God , not by the individual.

OBSERVABLE ACTION #2 - The believer responds to the test. 22:3-10

The fact that verse 3 reveals Abraham “rose early” indicates he was a man who immediately obeyed God’s word. As Dr. Kent Hughes said, “at the crack of dawn he was up and at it” (*Genesis*, p. 302).

It is significant to see that after three days of travel (v. 4) and after leaving the others behind, Abraham in verse 5 believes that both he and Isaac will return to them.

We know Biblically of at least two thoughts going through Abraham’s mind: 1) God would provide a lamb, thus he would not have to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:8); 2) God would raise Isaac from the dead if he did sacrifice him (Hebrews 11:17-19). Regardless of how this played

out Abraham was fully convinced that he and Isaac would come back from this worship service because he knew God promised that Isaac would produce “the” lineage and he knew he could trust God’s word. **This kind of faith that Abraham had did not rest on his feelings or on complete explanations, but on the promises of God’s word.**

OBSERVABLE ACTION #3 - God provides what is needed to pass the test. 22:11-14

“The angel of the LORD” is none other than a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Just in the nick of time, Jesus Christ stepped into this scene and provided the sacrifice. Abraham named this spot YHWH Jireh or Jehovah Jireh which means THE LORD PROVIDES.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe (Vol. 2, p. 112), in thinking about the provisions of God, asked five questions:

- 1) Where does God provide for our needs? At the place of testing, the place of His assignment.
- 2) When does God provide for our needs? Exactly when we need it; not one second before.
Hebrews 4:16
- 3) How does God provide for our needs? Often in quite natural ways - ram caught in a bush.
- 4) To whom does God give His special provisions? To those who trust Him and obey Him.
- 5) Why does God provide for us? Because He cares about us and loves us.

This is one of the most moving pictures in the entire Bible of the father and son acting in harmony to provide the sacrifice of the son. Isaac’s sacrifice was stopped, because he was a sinner and his sacrifice would not accomplish anything salvific. However, the One who would come through this line of Isaac, Jesus Christ, would not have His sacrifice stopped, because His is the only sacrifice that can take away sin.

There is only one mountain spot in the world where God will accept you, it is at Golgotha and there is only one way you can get to this spot, it is by faith. There, at this spot, the Lamb of God was sacrificed for you.