

**22.** 1. After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. <sup>5</sup> Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." <sup>6</sup> And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. <sup>7</sup> And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup> He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." <sup>13</sup> And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

<sup>15</sup> And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, <sup>18</sup> and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." <sup>19</sup> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

## Gen 22:1-2

As we go through this passage of scripture, there are several things that draw our attention to Jesus, even though the story is about Abraham and Isaac. The passage refers to Isaac as “your only son” three times with emphasis. We know that Jesus is God's only Son, and that He was the sacrifice for us. The way this story is told by Moses and the parallel references to Jesus are not by coincidence. It was all orchestrated by God to focus our attention on our Savior. It's a big story, about a bigger God.

So, why would God test Abraham in this way? God had already told Abraham several things that Isaac would do. In Gen 17:19 God told Abraham that He would establish an everlasting covenant with Isaac for his descendants after him. In Gen 21:12, God said, “it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned”, meaning that Abraham's descendants would be through Isaac. So why would God be telling Abraham to kill his only son?

Abraham had already seen God move miraculously in his life several times. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, Sarah was 90 years old. That's a miracle. God protected him from any enemies. God blessed everything Abraham had or did. So, at the request of God, what did Abraham do? Let's read verses 3-6, After God spoke to him, the very next morning, he got up and did everything he needed to do, to complete what God had told him to do. I'll bet he didn't tell Sarah what was going on but his obedience was immediate. It was obvious that Abraham loved and feared God. We show our love to God by obeying God. In John 14:15, Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” The NIV says, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

There's another little parallel in Verse 6 there, Isaac was carrying the wood that he was to be sacrificed on. Jesus carried the cross he was to be sacrificed on.

Now let's read verses 7-10. Can you imagine what Abraham might have been thinking during this time? I know I would have been thinking all kinds of crazy things regarding what God was telling him to do, if I were him. Let's look at Hebrews 11 for a minute. First with verses one and two. 1. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation. Verse 1 is the fundamental definition of faith. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Verse 2 tell us about the heroes of faith. Abraham is commended in verses 17-19. <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By this time in his life, Abraham's faith was at a level that he believed that God could and would raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham's faith grew to this level through the triumphs and failures of previous tests from God. Now, while Abraham was commended for his faith by the writer of Hebrews, his faith wasn't always this strong. Earlier in his life, he had some serious moments where fear overtook him instead of relying on the Lord. In Genesis chapter 16, we read of the whole issue of Hagar and Ishmael, where Abraham's faith was weak and he failed to rely on his faith in God fulfilling His promise. Then in Chapter 17, he allowed Pharaoh to take his wife and said she was his sister because he feared that Pharaoh would kill him for her. God watched over Sarah and inflicted various diseases on Pharaoh and his household until he sent Sarah back to Abraham. Then in Chapter 20, Abraham did it again with Abimelech the King of Gerar. God protected Sarah again by telling Abimelech in a dream that he was as

good as dead because he had taken Sarah. Abimelech sent her right back to Abraham. Abraham got to see God protect them, these trials continued to grow Abraham's faith, even though he stumbled through a few failures along the way.

Abraham, backed by his faith; was ready to plunge his knife into his son's heart, believing wholly in God to restore him. As we read verses 11 and 12, we see that God never really wanted Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. God provided a ram to take the place of Isaac, just like he provided a Lamb for us, Jesus; to take our place.

Let's read verses 13 through 19, Though God was testing Abraham, who gained the benefit from the testing? God or Abraham? In 1 Kings 8:39, towards the end of the verse, Solomon was giving a prayer of dedication to the Lord when the Ark of the Covenant was being brought into the temple, Solomon said, (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind). God already knew what Abraham would do; he already knew how far Abraham would go. Abraham was faced with such a hard test, a test that required him to kill his only son. Yet, he also got to see God provide a solution at the last second. What do you think this did for Abraham's faith in God's promises? Verses 15-19, God reaffirms the promises he already made to Abraham. Abraham's faith was grown exponentially through all of this. His confidence in God fulfilling His promises were permanently cemented in him, as was his faith. Though God said in verse 12, "Now I know you fear God", God already knew, it was for Abraham's benefit to hear God say this. You can also see how this was a testimony to Isaac regarding a complete dedication to God, although I'm sure Isaac was really freaked out by the whole thing. Something he would never forget, that's for sure.

So, has God tested you, or better yet; are you being tested right now? When God puts us through a test, even though these tests can be the hardest things imaginable. They are for our benefit. James 1: 2-4, 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. When the verse says we'll "be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing", it's not talking about material things. It's talking about our faith in God and His promises to us. The things that cause us to fail our tests and trials are fear and selfishness. Fear of losing something or someone we cherish. Selfishness because it's not what we want in life here on earth. God reveals to us where our faith is through these tests. Do we truly love God, and is He truly first in our lives? Each of us get to choose how we react to these tests. God sent His Only Son to die for all of us. To be the only worthy sacrifice to cover our sins. What do we have in our lives that can compare to the sacrifice God made for us? Nothing.

1 Peter 3: 3-9, <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is

inexpressible and filled with glory,<sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Verses 3 and 4 reveal the goal and reward of our faith. In verse 5, the word guarded is written in the present tense, our inheritance is being guarded and is waiting in heaven right now. Our faith that we hold onto includes this reward for us. Verse 6, though we face trials and hardships here on earth, the faith we have in the promises of God helps to sustain us. Verse 7, these trials refine us. It's easy to say we believe in God when everything is good. It's when life is hard and doesn't seem fair and sometimes un-just. This is when our faith in Jesus comes to fruition, that our hope and trust in God and His promises will carry us through the difficult times. Verses 8 and 9 give the definition of faith again and the goal of our faith.

People around us who know the hard things we're going through are also watching us. Not to see if we succeed or fail but they notice how we're dealing with the situation. Our reaction and responses to God during these difficult times are either a testimony to God or a stumbling block to someone who may be seeking answers about God. When terrible things are happening, it's easy, even natural to be angry with God or blame Him for what's happening. We have to remember to focus on God, trust in Him and look to the promises He's made to us regarding our eternity with Him. These tests and trials help us to grow in Him. They reveal our weaknesses in where we fail to rely on His goodness and provides us the opportunity to grow in Him and to be a light for Christ. Through them, they can be what someone else needs to see; in order to come to a point where they realize that they need Jesus in their lives. That's where our hope rests.

Jesus is the Lamb, like the ram God provided to Abraham to ransom his only son; God provided His only Son so we don't have to pay the price of our salvation ourselves. The thing is, we could never pay the price of our salvation and then receive the reward for it. We're not worthy, we would not be a pure sacrifice without any blemishes because of our sins. Without Jesus, we are not acceptable to God. Those who choose not to believe in Jesus and choose not to accept His gift of salvation; ultimately die in their sins. And for that, they do not spend their eternity in heaven with God. There is no eternal inheritance for them. If you haven't made this decision to believe in Jesus, there's no better time than now because we are not promised a tomorrow. If you'd like to do this, you can talk to me, one of the pastors, elders or deacons here after the service. We'd love to show you how to accept Jesus's gift of salvation.