

The Greatness and the Work of Jesus: The Trials of the Faith

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Hebrews 11:17-19

"It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God tested him; And he who had received the promises was willing to sacrifice Isaac, his only son. 18 even when God had said to him, 'Isaac is the son by which your descendants will proceed. 19 Abraham came to the conclusion that if Isaac died, God had the power to bring him back to life; And in a certain sense Abraham received his son back from the dead."

Nothing was more remarkable about Abraham's faith than offering to his son. The purpose of the writer is to demonstrate the efficacy of faith to withstand a great trial, to carry out a very difficult task and to obtain a very important blessing.

GOD HAS THE RIGHT TO TEST US

Genesis 22:1-2 "After these things **God tested Abraham** and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 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."

To test, is the act by which God examines the loyalty and obedience of His servants. God reserves the right to prove us. Jesus tested the rich young man in **Matthew 19:21** "Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." **It was proof of his submission and loyalty to God; To test where his treasure was.**

The word "**offered**" in this text is the same word used to offer sacrifices. How could Abraham have done this if it was something both against natural law and God's law to sacrifice his own innocent son?

Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."

The reason is that God himself commanded him to do so and Abraham showed his willingness to trust in God even though what he asked of him seemed completely contradictory and unreasonable, but we see that Abraham's confidence in God was there. **God as our maker and Sovereign has the absolute right to ask of us all that He wants us to surrender because everything we have and are comes from Him and therefore must be made available to Him.**

1 Chronicles 29:11-14 "**Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours... 12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might... 14 ...For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you"**

OBEYING EVEN IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND

Sarah could no longer give him another son and killing Isaac was to cut off all hope. How could Abraham reconcile the divine commandment with the divine promise? **God calls us to do acts of obedience that are contrary to our natural desires and to our human reason.**

Matthew 16:24-25 *"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would **save his life**[g] will lose it, **but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."***

Just as God asked Abraham for total obedience, He still requires obedience, complete and permanent, even though our logic cannot understand what He asks. We need to grow in trust in God and renew our mind, otherwise we will not advance beyond what our limited understanding approves. The call of God cannot be discarded no matter how painful obedience is.

DO YOU LOVE MORE THE PROMISES OF GOD OR GOD HIMSELF?

Genesis 17:9 *"And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you **throughout their generations.**"*

Through Abraham's offspring all families would be blessed (**Genesis 17:7**), even through his lineage Christ would come according to the flesh. **All this depended on Isaac's staying alive. The sacrifice of Isaac would invalidate and annul all the promises God had made to him; Making their fulfillment impossible.** This test revealed something crucial: **who did Abraham love more God or Isaac?**

Abraham did not argue with God about the promises He had made to him; (Genesis 22: 3). Abraham had faith in righteousness and divine wisdom. It is as if he were saying, 'God, You know very well what You are doing, so I am ready to follow you in everything.' **Abraham was fully convinced that God was able to fulfill His word.** Faith convinces the soul of the absolute supremacy of God; That His wisdom does not make mistakes; That His love is infinite and His power is unlimited. Rests in the character of God and trust Him in the face of every obstacle.

The text does not say that Abraham offered his son simply by submission but because he trusted God. God is pleased with the confidence that man decides to place in Him and calls His friends those who have that level of trust. This is how friends are, they trust each other totally and sincerely.

When are we asked to offer our Isaac? When people, things or accomplishments we love are taken away from us. Also abandoning things that please us for the love of God. As when we refuse to satisfy sinful desires: cut off our hand or take our eye. (**Matthew 5:29-30**). We will be tested to know where we have placed our love.

PREPARING OURSELVES FOR MAJOR TESTS

Abraham and Sarah had gone through various trials in their faith: to leave their land and their relatives, to dwell in tents; The long wait for the birth of their heir. But they were still going to pass a more severe test. God trains His children little by little; As they grow in grace, they are assigned greater tasks and will go through deeper waters to manifest their faith in God.

The text says in **Genesis 22:1** *"It happened that after these things ..."* the miraculous birth of Isaac, the great feast Abraham did when he was weaned (**v. 8**), and casting away Ishmael (**v. 14**). Abraham was happy; His future looked promising. Then came the most severe test of all. It is good to be prepared for the tests; The more we anticipate future testing, the less easily we will get stuck when they arrive:

1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

2 Chronicles 32:31 "...God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart."

Do not be surprised if God is now preparing you for more severe tests than you had few years ago. **The Lord is determined to make manifest that there are people on earth who are able to give up all comfort and endure the hardest before giving up their call; That He has children who love Him more than their own lives, and who are prepared to trust in the midst of darkness.**

Job 1:8 "And the Lord said to 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?"

Without the test we would not have the evidence that we have a true faith **James 1:2-4** "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**" Someone said: "When you hit the jar you realize whether it is full or empty, cracked or solid; So by these proofs of providence we are discovered.

We are benefited by the tests **Romans 5: 3-4** "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope;"

The Christian has a deeper obligation to share all that God asks of him/her: God's generosity should encourage us to freely surrender what he asks of us, because nobody loses anything by giving everything to God. Faith is the one that makes us respond to its requirements, and to His calls.

WHAT FAITH DOES IN US

- **Faith makes us wise because we act wisely when we trust in God, while unbelief makes us awkward** **Luke 24:25** "Then Jesus said to them, "**You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures.**" Faith teaches us to value God's favor, the smiles of His face, the consolations of Heaven, shows us that the appearance of things is nothing compared to Inner peace and joy.
- **Faith also allows us to resolve what we do not understand doubts when we are in a dilemma: Abraham's faith took away the difficulty, he said: "God is able to raise Isaac from the dead"** Faith brings down the carnal imaginations And everything that rises against the knowledge of God, bringing all captive thinking to obedience to Christ.
- **Faith looks at future things, and in the light of that reality, the most difficult tests seem nothing** **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** "**For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!** **18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.**" The senses only deal with things present, he who walks in the light of eternity goes calmly and happily in passing By the cloudy valleys.

- **Faith also looks to the past and considers:** 'If God gave me Christ, how can I deny my Isaac? Abraham did not offer Ishmael but his only-begotten beloved-Abraham is like the Heavenly Father. **Faith awaits the rewards of God.**

Mark 10:29-30 *"Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, ³⁰ will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life."*

God gives us back what we give Him Galatians 6: 7 *"Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. **You will always harvest what you plant.**" Hannah gave her son and God gave her many children (1 Samuel 2:20-21).*

The fastest way to end a test is to give up completely. God saw Abraham's faith. Genesis 22:12 *"for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."*

- **Faith allows us to know God more. Abraham knew God as his provider Genesis 22:14** *"Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the Lord will provide"...)" The more we trust in the Lord, the greater the revelation of God.*

THE REWARD OF THE TEST

God confirmed him and further extended his covenant with Abraham:

Genesis 22:16-18 *"This is what the Lord says: **Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that 17 I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants[a] beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. 18 And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.**"*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How much are you willing to trust in God even if it seems illogical what he asks you?
2. Are you using your faith to solve what you do not understand or the doubts that come to you?
3. Do you love the promises God has made to you or God?
4. What is the way to pass the test more quickly?