

God Tested Abraham

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[0:00] Let's turn in the scriptures to Genesis 22. Some time later, God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham, here I am, he replied.

Then God said, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.

Early the next morning, Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there.

We will worship and then we will come back to you. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac. And he himself carried the fire and the knife.

[1:09] As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father, Abraham.

Father? Yes, my son, Abraham replied. The fire and wood are here, Isaac said.

But where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered. God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, Abraham, Abraham.

Here I am, he replied. Do not lay a hand on the boy, he said. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

[2:18] Abraham looked up and there in the thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

So Abraham called that place, the Lord will provide. And to this day it is said, on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me.

Then Abraham returned to his servants and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba. Let's hear this passage opened up to our hearts.

[3:33] Pastor Jason. In this life we never get to enjoy peace for long, do we?

We left Abraham in Beersheba enjoying peace and prosperity. God's goodness shines on every day of his life.

And if we were writing the story, it would be a great ending, we could say. And they lived happily ever after. But then it would be a fairy tale.

And we do not live in a fairy tale. New days bring new tests. New days bring new heartache. New days bring growth pains.

And chapter 21 ends by saying that Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

And then chapter 22, sometime later, God tested Abraham.

[4:43] Tests. Trials. Temptations. They are a part of your life. James says consider them pure joy. Why?

Because they develop perseverance. And perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Tests, trials, temptations.

They are God's stepping stones to holiness, to completeness, to perfection. And so are you in Beersheba now? Watch out.

A test, a trial is coming. God is committed to your holiness, believer. And that means that if you are not now experiencing a test, a trial, you will be.

Big or small, but you will be. And if you are in the middle of a difficult, painful trial, rejoice. God's at work in your life.

[5 : 45] Rejoice. You're not alone. These things have been God's tool all the way from the very beginning. And so today we're going to see Abraham's test. And then his obedience and how he made it through.

And then how we, ourselves, where we'll get the encouragement that we need in order to pass great tests and great trials. Or small tests and small trials.

So are you in a trial? Are you in a test? Are you going to be in a test or a trial? Well then, Genesis chapter 22 is for us, for you to hear.

And if you're unsaved, let me say that tonight you're going to see God's amazing love. God's amazing love for sinners.

If you'll listen tonight, if you'll believe tonight, you can be saved this very night. You can pass from death to life, even where you're sitting.

[6 : 46] So first, let's look at Abraham's test. Abraham's test. Verse 1, sometime later, God tested Abraham. And he said to him, Abraham, Abraham.

Let's pause there and say God is having personal dealings with Abraham. This test has Abraham's name written on it.

It has his name tag on it. So I'm looking at the children in our audience. And I had this illustration ready to go, but it's a public school illustration.

And I don't see any public schoolers here. Well, when I was in public school, I had an art box. And in my art box, it had crayons and colored pencils.

It had my name on it. And it was for me. It wasn't for anyone else. These were my crayons. These were my colored pencils. It had my name on it.

[7 : 44] And our trials, in the same way, has our names written on them. They're for us. God has picked them out, placed them on us.

They're just for us. Now, this trial has Abraham's name on it. It says, Abraham, here I am, he replied. Then God said, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah.

Isaiah, sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about. So this is the test of Abraham and his faith.

God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son. So God creates, shapes, forms this test to strike at the very heart of everything that God had promised to Abraham.

Because on Isaac, all of the promises are hinging. And if there's no Isaac, nothing else can happen. God creates and shapes and forms this test also to strike at the very heart of Abraham.

[8 : 57] Will he do the same for you? Create, form, shape, test that strike at your heart, that strike at the promises that seem to contradict his promises to you?

I would think so. I would think so. So who must die? Who must be put on the altar? What must Abraham kill and burn with his own hands?

Your son. Not your servant. Not bulls or lambs. Not your steward. Your son. Your only son.

Ishmael's been cast out. Remember, and Abraham, I'm sure with a certain amount of brokenheartedness, watched Ishmael leave and walk into the desert. And now must he sacrifice all that remains to him?

Is Isaac. Yes, your son. Your only son, Isaac, whom you loved. Abraham had his heart wrapped around this boy in love.

[10 : 04] I know you cling to him. I know you love him. I know he's your laughter. You're Isaac. But I must have him. I must have him.

You live for him. You would die for him. And he's exactly who you must give me. And so parents, you know that it's nothing really for you to die for your children.

If a bus or a train were approaching them and it was either you or them, you would. I would think you would give yourself up without even thinking. You would die for your children.

We heard Friday of David's sorrow at Absalom's death. And he said, oh, if I would have died instead of you. I think every parent, I don't know this because I've never been there, but I would think every parent could say that when they lose one of their children, if it would have been me instead of you.

That's parental love. And children and teenagers, I don't think you have any idea how much your parents love you. You just can't know how much they love you until you have become a parent.

[11:17] Parents. So who can measure a parent's love? But it's the one, it's the son you love, Abraham, that I want.

It's the son you love. So the pain is going to be incomprehensible. So who can imagine it? I think Abraham would have sacrificed himself a thousand times before sacrificing Isaac. But it's painful and all the more because it's so contradictory to everything God has said up to this point.

This is not only painful because this is Abraham's Isaac. This is the one that he loves. But this is the one that God has promised him. Can you hear? Can you just imagine?

Can you hear Abraham's heart? God, this is Isaac. This is the one that you promised me. This is the one I waited years and years for. This is the one that you gave me when I was a hundred years old and Sarah, my wife, and her womb was as good as dead.

We waited and waited and you promised. And then now you want me to sacrifice him? You want me to slit his throat and burn him to ash?

[12:29] Lord, this makes no sense. This doesn't seem right. This doesn't seem like this should be happening. I don't understand. Brothers and sisters, it's not a trial if we understand the whys and the wherefores.

It's not a trial when we understand what God is doing and why God is asking us to go through the things that we are going through. Or it's not a trial when you know how it's all going to end up.

In a certain sense, that would be no trial. That would just be a test of your personal strength. Can you endure this to make it to the known end? And for you have you know why this is going on.

It wouldn't be testing our faith if we understood. But this is the test of faith. And so, brothers and sisters, are you in over your heads and you don't know what's going on?

You don't understand why God is doing what he's doing. You're saying in your hearts, I don't think it should be this way. I don't understand. This doesn't make sense. This just hurts.

[13:37] Well, that's a trial of faith. You can't understand what God is doing and why God is putting you through this. At least see it for what it is.

Knowing what it is, that it's a test of your faith, will to a certain degree help you get through it.

Knowing what it is will help you get through it.

Well, this is Abraham's test. It's a painful test. A confusing test. A difficult test. Now, let's see Abraham's obedience.

Abraham's obedience and how he got through it. And as we do, I want us to be learning lessons of how we can make it through our tests. Well, it says in verse 3, Early the next morning, Abraham got up and saddled his donkey.

How do you get through a trial of faith? With prompt obedience. With prompt obedience. Abraham doesn't know what God is doing, but he knows what God wants him to do.

[14:43] What he has to do. And so that's what Abraham does. He gets up early. He takes his servants. He takes Isaac. And the first step is the woodlot. To get wood.

And he's chopping wood early in the morning. Can you imagine what's going through Abraham's mind with every swing of the axe? This is wood to burn my son.

This is wood that I'm going to use to burn my son. And he looks over at Isaac and he has to judge Isaac's height and weight.

No, it's not enough wood. More chopping. More chopping. More wood. And then he's done. Next step of obedience is a three-day trip to the region of Moriah.

These are mountains outside of Jerusalem. Outside of Jerusalem. The mountains around Jerusalem. God has a special place. Picked out.

[15:49] Where he wants Abraham to make his sacrifice. It was going to be on a mountainside. On a mountaintop. Outside of Jerusalem. That would be the place of sacrifice.

So imagine the trip. Hour after hour. Abraham's stealing glances. Isaac doesn't have any idea what's going on.

Abraham's saying to himself, Is this really happening? Am I really doing this? What am I doing? God, what are you doing? Make it stop. Please make it stop. And there's no word. And I'm sure he's praying, Take this away from me.

This is too much. Lord, I can't take it. Please take this away from me. And there's no word. Lord, three day trip. Heaven is silent. And then he looks up and he sees.

[16 : 46] And he stops the procession. And he says to the servant, Stay here. While I and the boy go on. We'll go over there. We'll worship. And we will come back. And now look at verse six.

Abraham took the wood. And he put it on Isaac. And he himself carried the fire and the knife as they walked. And so they're walking.

And Isaac finally says, Father, yes, my son. The fire and the wood are here. But where's the land for the burnt offering? Everything seems to be here, but there's no sacrifice.

God himself will provide the lamb, my son. You know the rest of the story. It's a familiar story.

Abraham built an altar. He bound his son. He reached for the knife. And just then the heavens rang out.

[17 : 53] Abraham, Abraham, here I am. Don't lay your hand on the boy. Don't do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God. And trial's over.

Suddenly, surprisingly, the trial ends. Abraham is obeyed all the way. And he's passed with flying colors. So how do you get through a trial?

Well, you take the next step of obedience. You take the first step. And then you take the next step. Abraham obeyed all the way. So he got up early.

He went to the woodlot. He traveled three days. He bound his son. He grabbed the knife. Step by step, obedience. Worrying about what's in front of you.

Taking care of that. Going to the next thing. And the reason I'm saying this is because obedience so often in our difficulties, in our trials, in our pain, is one of the last things that we think about.

[18 : 55] We're thinking about ourselves. We're thinking about how it hurts. And those things are understandable and reasonable. I'm not saying you shouldn't be thinking about those things. But Abraham shows us that by plotting, step by step obedience, that's the direction that faith takes.

Yes, it hurts, but I will obey. Yes, it hurts, but I'll do the very next thing. So how did Abraham get through it? He got through it by obedience.

But more than that, underneath that, brothers and sisters, it was faith. It was faith. Faith in God's power. Faith in God's goodness. He might have doubted before.

But Abraham arises to the occasion. Abraham has grown. He's known the Lord for 70 years, 60, 70 years. He's mature. Does God call for my son?

Then he'll have him. And the book of Hebrews says that Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead. And figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from the dead.

[20 : 02] From the dead. All along, Abraham was thinking, he was thinking, I'm going to obey. And then he was thinking, I know my God. I know what he's capable of.

He already brought Isaac from death. Remember, Sarah's womb was as good as dead. Isaac was a miracle child to begin with. And so it didn't stop God from giving me Isaac from before.

And so knife and fire won't stop God from giving me him again. And so it was faith. It was faith in God's resurrection power that made Abraham hold the course.

Hold the course. When his body and his soul and his mind had to be screaming out for this to stop. He was saying, no, my God can raise the dead.

I know this about him. If he can raise the dead, then I can obey. So the next thing, I can go on. And you see the clues of his faith throughout this passage.

[21 : 07] Verse 5. Verse 5. We will worship and then we will come back to you. Abraham knew what he was planning to do. And so this whole, we'll go and we'll come back.

Either Abraham is lying to make this whole thing easier. Or he is saying, we will worship. We will worship. And we will come back. This isn't going to end in death.

After death, there's going to be life. And then in verse 8, Abraham says, God, to Isaac's question, God will provide the lamb. God will provide the lamb. Again, he's either lying to Isaac to make this easier to get through.

But I think what was really happening was that his faith was reaching out to God. Expecting God to do something despite how everything seemed to be going.

And so faith powered his obedience. Faith kept him from taking the next step. And then the next step. And then the next step. Until the knife was in his hand.

[22:14] Until he was there. And he believed and he kept on believing. And in the end, Abraham's faith was justified. It was vindicated. It was shown to be in the right.

Everything he had hoped, everything that he had believed, had come true. Abraham looked and he saw a ram. The Lord provided a sacrifice in the place of Isaac.

The ram was caught in a thicket. And so he called that place, that place, that mountain outside of Jerusalem. The Lord will provide. This is the Lord will provide.

This place is that. And so we've seen Abraham's faith and his obedience. And now I want to ask you. What will give you the faith to persevere through the trial that you're in?

Or the trial that you're going to be in? Or the trials that you will be in inevitably in your life? To keep obeying. To keep persevering. So that those trials do their good work of making you complete.

[23:15] Just like James said. How can you do that? How can you be like Abraham? Because we want to be like Abraham. We want to have this kind of faith. That would, if God asked to sacrifice our children, we would do that.

It would be painful. It would be so painful. But we want that kind of faith. Well, where do you get that faith? Where do you get that faith in the face of difficult, terrible trials that hurt us so badly?

To go on, to overcome like Abraham did. The answer is the gospel in this text. When you feast on the gospel in this text. And when you see the deep, deep love of God.

Then you find grace to go through trials. Have you seen the gospel in this text? Its aroma is all over this passage.

There's been all sorts of arrows pointing to Jesus. Pointing forward to Jesus. Hasn't there been? On the mountain. On the mountain of the Lord, it will be provided.

[24:22] Moses wrote that. It hadn't been provided yet. But it would be. The Lord provided the lamb. Just as Moses said he would. Just as Abraham said he would.

And who would have ever thought. That it would be his son. See, I think that would be the most nearly impossible thing to imagine and seen in this passage.

If we didn't have the New Testament to look back on it. Because who would have ever thought.

That the lamb that God would provide for sacrifice. Would be his son.

Maybe another lamb. Some other sacrifice. Some other way. But it wasn't some other way. It was his son. It was his son. It was his Isaac.

It was the father's joy. The father's laughter. His son. His only son. The son that he loved. He didn't have any other son like him.

[25:27] When God says. Take your son. Your only son. That word.

Can be translated. Your darling son. The one that you're specially. In love with. Because they're alone. An only child has special. Love from their parents.

And so. Here is Jesus. God's only son. He has no other son like him. He. He was the one and only. The darling of his heart. None other thrilled him like this son.

Brothers and sisters. At the core. At the heart. Of reality. Before there was anything else. There was this.

There was this throbbing. Thriving. Passionate. Joyful. Love. Between the father. And the son. He said.

[26:27] This is the son. Whom I love. With him. I am. Well. Pleased. So forever and ever. The father. Gazed upon the son. And loved him.

And the son. Gazed back at the father. And loved him. They spoke. They smiled. They laughed. They enjoyed.

They built a world together. Together. They built this world together. They chose the people together. The bonds. That tied the father.

And the son together. Were deep. They were essential. Which means. They were part of. Of who they were. And they were eternal.

They loved each other. With a love. That we can never even possibly imagine. Now that's the backdrop. That this passage. And that's the backdrop.

[27:21] That the cross. Where the cross. Comes into focus. See this is how you get. To the bottom. Of that meaning of. On the mountain. The Lord will.

It will. On the mountain of the Lord. It will be provided. Because this is where you. See. What is it going to cost. The Lord. The father.

To provide. The sacrifice. This is where you see the depths. Of the father's. Agony. The father's. Sacrifice. See. We've seen Abraham's pain.

But that pain. I'm going to offer up my son. I'm going to slit his throat. And burn him. To ash. That pain. That he was thinking. Was going to happen. Is only a window.

Into God. The father's. Painful. Sacrifice. See. He didn't let Abraham's. Hand fall.

[28:17] He didn't. Crush Abraham. He didn't. Break. Abraham's. Heart. And shatter. His soul. He didn't. Make Abraham. Slit the throat. Of his son.

And then watch his blood. Flow on the altar. And. He didn't. Make Abraham. See. The eyes. Of his son. As they.

Gazed back. Said. What are you doing. To me. Father. He did not. Make Abraham. Feel the horror. And the anguish. Of watching. His son. Go up. In smoke. He stopped. Abraham's hand. But he didn't.

Stop his own hand. We read. And we noticed. That Abraham. Carried the knife. And the fire. To the place. Of sacrifice. God himself.

[29:12] Brought the cup. Of wrath. To his son. He brought. The fire. He brought. The knife. He chopped. The wood. He built. The altar. He bound. His son. But he didn't.

Stop his hand. And he plunged. His sword. Into his son. Into the heart. Of his son. And he took. His life. As a ransom.

For his people. So the Romans. Hung him. And the Jews. Plotted. And planned. But it was the father. It was the father. It was the father's hand.

That took his life. It was the father. Who looked. Into his son's eyes. As they gazed. Back to him. And cried out. My God. My God.

Why have you. Forsaken. Me. See. It was the father. Who offered him. As a burnt sacrifice. This morning. We saw it was a guilt offering.

[30:08] Here. It's a burnt. Offering. Jesus flesh. And his bones. Filled with fire. The fire of God's anger. For sin. So the father.

Poured out. Hell. Onto his son. How great. Was that anger. Anger. That was due. For all my sin. For all your sin.

And not just you. And not just me. But a multitude. A multitude. That no one. Can number. Millions. And millions. And he took all of their sin. And the New Testament.

Says he became. Sin. The very thing. God hates. And despises. He became sin.

The son he loved. Became the sin. He hates. And on the cross. God's righteous indignation. His holy wrath. Holy jealousy. Consumed.

[31:07] His son. So what a mystery. The cross is. We see the agony. Of the father. What else could it be?

Because this is the son. That the son. That he loves. And it's the son. That he loves. That is suffering. No father wants to see. His child suffer. With David. We say.

Absalom. Absalom. My son. My son. Why couldn't it have been me. Instead of you. If I only had died. Instead of you. God the father. Tore out his heart. On the day.

He provided. The lamb. With a sacrifice. Friday night. We saw the son's agony. And tonight. We see the father's agony. They suffered. In different ways.

You need to be careful. The father was not on the cross. The son was. But horror. Of horrors. Grace. Of grace. It was the Lord's will. To crush him.

[32:04] So brothers and sisters. What would give you the strength? What will feed your souls. When you're going through. Those difficult trials. Well feast your eyes.

On the love of God. In this passage. The love of God. The father for you. He didn't stop his own hand. And he tore apart.

The trinity itself. He brought discord. Into that glorious. Glorious. Eternal. Symphony. Just to bring you back to God. To forgive you. All your sins.

He quenched the righteous wrath. His righteous wrath. In the blood of his son. And he bound him on the altar. And he watched. As Jesus.

Gazed back at him. And cried. My God. Why have you forsaken me? And he did it for you. Brother. Sister. He did that for you.

[33 : 04] And so brothers and sisters. Whatever he is putting you through. Whatever trial you are facing. You can trust him. Because you don't have to know.

How this is going to end. You don't have to know. There are all the reasons. And the whys. And the wherefores. Look at his heart. Look at his heart.

You can trust him. God never calls you to go as far as he went. He never calls you to go as far as he went. He stopped Abraham's hand.

He didn't stop his own. And so whatever God calls you to. You can know that God the father went further. He went further down the road of pain. And you can know that the son.

He went further down the road of pain. Whatever pain you suffer. In the middle of that suffering. You can trust him. Because he knows.

[33 : 59] See how he loves you. See what lengths he went to love you. What depths of pain he went to love you.

And so now I ask. What will you suffer for him? Love so amazing. So divine. Demands my life. My soul. My all. I ask then. What will you suffer for him? What will you sacrifice? How can we go on building our own little kingdoms?

And living for this world's luxuries. And so small that they are. How can we go on compromising. When God loved us in such an uncompromising fashion.

And he loved us so totally. So what will you endure? What trial will you endure? What sin will you kill? Because your father loves you.

[35 : 04] What money will you give? Because God gave that which was most valuable to him. Where will you go? What will you lose?

What will you sacrifice? Not because you have to save yourself. But because your father. Laid down his son's life for you.

So just ask you. How are you going to live differently? Then my lost friend. Do you see the love of God.

For sinners. God really did give up his son to save sinners. He really did. And every day that you kept saying. I don't think I have room in my life for Jesus.

I don't think I really need to give my life to Jesus. Every day you think. I can just turn over a new leaf anytime I want. I can be a different person. Every day that you say tomorrow.

[36 : 03] Maybe tomorrow. Is one more day that you look on the father's sacrifice. And you say. That's not really worth it. You scorn it as a worthless thing.

So the. God's word is. Stop. Stop. Your sins. Weigh you down. Every day you're piling up sin. And maybe you don't feel them. But they are chains. Around you. Around you. All over you. And they weigh you down. Not to the grave. But to hell itself. And see you're dangled over a pit. You're dangled over a pit. And in due time your foot will slip. And down you will go. And you will never be recovered.

But look at the love of God for sinners. This is what he will do to save you. So why perish? So why perish? It's time to call on the name of the Lord and to be saved.

[37 : 11] Let's pray. Heavenly Father. We've kind of spent weeks and weeks on this passage.

Thank you for the truth that we have seen. I pray that you would please help us to live differently because of it. We know that you have loved us.

You demonstrate your own love for us in this. That while we were still sinners. Christ died. For the ungodly. For us.

And that was your sacrifice. And though you did not suffer the pain of sin. You did suffer the pain of giving up your son.

The son that you loved. We thank you. We ask that you would forgive us. Forgive us for playing around with such small things.

[38 : 29] And living our lives for such little things. When you have loved us so much. Pray that you would open our eyes. By the spirit. That we might begin to understand that which is incomprehensible.

Your love for your people. And I pray for those who are lost. I pray that you would wake them up from the sleep of death that they are in.

Wake them up. Show them their danger. And show them how serious. And how wonderful. And how gracious you are. Open their eyes to reality.
Open their eyes to things that are brighter. And bigger. And more beautiful. Than this world. And its trinkets. And all the things that they love. Pray that you would show them something truly beautiful. Show them yourself. And your fantastic. Wonderful. Grace and love. Pray that we would go away. [39 : 33] Changed. That we would go away. Rejoicing because you love us. And out of the joy. That we have in our hearts. That we would start laying down our lives.
For you. And for one another. Pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.