

05.03.26

## Genesis

### Chapter 22 - God's Test of Devotion

#### Preparing for the Test (vs. 1-3)

**Genesis 22:1-3:** Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

A test of faith. Do we believe? That's the question, isn't it? Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it's impossible to please God.” It must be pretty important. I mean, we call ourselves Believers. The question is, are you really a

Believer? God proclaims to us that there is a test. In John 6, many will come up to Jesus at that time, and they were actually being fed, feeding of the 5,000. And Jesus says, “Look, the only reason you come around is because you ate food. You were fed. But you need to do the work of My Father.” And the people go, “Well, what is the work of Your Father?” He goes, “Believe.” We naturally perceive that to be a fairly easy thing to do without realizing the ramifications of the word. It is such an intense word in Scripture that it would literally be the difference between heaven and hell.

There's a passage, if you'll look with me, in 2 Thessalonians 1, in which Paul writes to the church that's going through a lot of difficulties; they're going through suffering.

And his statement is in verse 3,

(2 Thessalonians 1:3) “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

(2 Thessalonians 1:4) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

(2 Thessalonians 1:5) This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

(2 Thessalonians 1:6) For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

(2 Thessalonians 1:7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

(2 Thessalonians 1:8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

(2 Thessalonians 1:9) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

There is a hell. I know it's kind of been soft-sold and I think people like to subvert it, but there is actually a place of eternal destruction to those who do not obey the gospel or believe. It's actually the same word. Strange phenomenon, isn't it, to know that “believe” and “obey” in Scripture are basically fundamentally the same word in many of the texts? Why is that? Because you really only obey that which you truly trust in. And if you really believe something, you'll do what it says.

So, as you go into 2 Thessalonians 2, he begins to talk about many that go with the deception of wickedness.

And he says this in verse 10,

(2 Thessalonians 2:10) “And with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

(2 Thessalonians 2:11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.”

Because they wouldn't receive the love of God. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,

that whosoever believes in Him will not perish.” Well, what He's asking you to believe is that He loves you enough to send His own Son to die in your place. You choose not to believe that, as Hebrews would say, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great the salvation?” Scripture is very clear about the whole aspect of faith.

If you look with me in 2 Corinthians 13, there is a reminder that we should actually test ourselves.

It reads this way,

(2 Corinthians 13:5) “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”

We come to a passage in which Abraham is being tested for his devotion to God. It is a test in which we all must face in some way. And as we come to this passage in Genesis 22, we come to a point in which literally it is a defining moment in Abraham's life. Look, there are times that we might have prayed a prayer, might have walked down an aisle; we might have even been baptized. But somewhere along the line, there's going to be a defining

moment in your life. And it's God's grace that will begin to reveal whether or not that was genuine. Just because you said some words and repeated after somebody doesn't mean that you actually believe. Faith is something that you live by. It's something that you make decisions by. And there's going to come a time in your life in which you're going to face the legitimacy of the words that you said. God will test in many ways, and throughout our life, you can almost sense the calling of God upon us. And there are things that I would say in some cases, even seemingly minor decisions that we begin to make. And some of them are easier than others. When I was thinking about the whole process of Abraham's calling, I mean, this passage that we're looking at as he is called upon to bring his only son before God and to lay him on an altar, this is not the beginning. The whole thing began in Genesis 12 when God called him out. And God called him out in a time in which his brother had died. He had to deal with literally separation from his family in which God called him out. The question fundamentally is, in times of disappointment or loss, are you going to trust God? It's going to happen. There are going to be times that

happens in your life, and there are going to be times in which God's going to tell you to abandon the relationship between your family and friends. The question is, are you going to trust God? Are you going to do what He says? There are going to be times in which that which you value the most seems beyond your grasp. And I think that there are times that you become very frustrated and upset because those things happen. In Abraham's life, there was a time of famine. The question is, are you going to trust God, or are you going to go to your own resources? There was a time in his life in which he was told to do literally something that was repulsive and painful. If you were told to do something repulsive and painful, would you trust God and do it? That's an interesting question, isn't it? Because all of that really is defining whether or not you are living by faith. I mean, we have the promises of God, but if those promises were delayed, would you still trust God? That's about faith, isn't it? Faith is that which endures, as Hebrews will continue to repeat over and over again.

And I would say this as we read in particular, Abraham is clearly concerned about his relatives. He's clearly concerned about those loved ones that he has. And you have that interesting picture of Lot and the fact that, you know, the total destruction, catastrophic event of Sodom and Gomorrah, and here his beloved is living there. If in fact you came across a time or something happened in which the loved ones that you embraced so dearly, if their fate hung in the balance and you were uncertain about what was happening to them, would you still trust God? Interesting question and one that arises in Abraham's life, so really through his brother's death, through his family separation, through sterility, through division and strife in his home, through domestic discord, attacks from the north, even kidnapping in that particular setting, he continues to trust God, faltering, failing in weakness oftentimes, but he keeps coming back to God.

Interestingly enough, you would think that would be enough. But that's not all. Because God, somewhere along the line, is going to test you with that which is most valuable to you. And it's not until that which is most

valuable to you is laid on the altar, then there's the legitimacy of true faith. To the rich man, it was his wealth. "Sell all that you have, give it to the poor, follow Me." The rich man walked away sad, because that's what he loved. And where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. This is one of the reasons why God will give you the test. It is the grace of God that does that because if in fact you fail the test, your life is certainly in tragedy.

We come to this passage, it begins with,

(Genesis 22:1) "Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham..."

"After these things." I oftentimes think about the little white area between the last chapter and the beginning of the verse. You know that little white area there? It's very interesting. There's quite a bit of time in that text. What happened during those days? Well, what we know is that Isaac is now a young man. What we know, according to the passage is that Abraham has been at peace with his neighbor. Fundamentally, all seems to be well. The planets seem to be aligning. The wishes have been granted that he desired with all of his heart, and domestic

issues seem to be resolved in some way. Things are going pretty well. I mean, it's like, you know, your car's running, the appliances are working, and there's no holes in your roof, and things are going pretty well. So, at this time and through this time, God gives us these interesting moments of graciousness and, to some degree, bliss in our lives. Nevertheless, what's interesting to me is not a whole lot is written about those times, which seems to tell us that it's in the difficult times that become the memorable moments in which the reality of our faith begins to really grow; it's not the easy times.

How much time has actually passed? Well, what we know, according to the passage, is actually Isaac is referred to as the lad in verse 5. But if you kind of mark that, he's mentioned as a lad. And if you look in verse 3, Abraham takes along with him a couple of young men to help him. You might want to note that “young men” and the word “lad” is the same word. So, it's telling us that Isaac is probably a young man. Now, what's also interesting about this is if you were to ask the sages, and more specifically the rabbis, “How old was Isaac as Abraham was taking

him up to Moriah," they would say he was 37, which we wouldn't normally think of him being that old. And one of the reasons why they feel that is the very next chapter, his mother dies. And she's 127. So, she was 90 when he was born. So, that's 37. And that's where they come up with that amount of time. Josephus will actually write in his letters, as was another tradition, that he was 25. So, he'll put it in the history that he was 25. I would probably lean more towards him being 25, but I think a lot of times we think of him as just a little lad. But as you go on to read the passage, Abraham would not pile all the wood on a little lad. But he is called upon to carry this. So, it seems as if he's around 25. So, what we would say is that about 25 years have passed. Now, think about that.

Because up to this point, from Chapter 12 to Chapter 21 is 25 years. And now, between Chapter 21 and 22 is 25 years. Because when he was called, he was 75 years old. When he had his son, he was 100 years old. So, you have 25 years in which he was working through the whole process of God's promises. And it is an arduous path, and there were difficulties that came, and the catastrophes that he had to deal with, and the loss that he had to deal

with. But now it's been quiet, and nothing is written in the times of quiet.

Ecclesiastes speaks about this, and when you come to an interesting passage, if you turn me to Ecclesiastes, he talks about those times that come into our lives, and oftentimes difficult times.

In Chapter 11 specifically, the reading is this in verse 8, (Ecclesiastes 11:8) “Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness...”

I don't know how yours reads, but mine reads,

“... for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility.”

What he's talking about is what is oftentimes referred to as the vicissitudes of life, which means fundamentally this, that life has its ups and downs, but it's largely downs. That's an interesting word, isn't it? That you'll have moments of everything being okay, but for the most part, a lot of life is the difficulty that you have to deal with.

Ecclesiastes refers to this, if you look with me in Ecclesiastes 7.

(Ecclesiastes 7:1) “A good name is better than a good ointment,

And the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth.

(Ecclesiastes 7:2) It is better to go to a house of mourning  
Than to go to a house of feasting,

Because that is the end of every man,

And the living takes it to heart.”

It's the difficult times that you begin to deepen your thoughts.

(Ecclesiastes 7:3) “Sorrow is better than laughter,

For when a face is sad a heart may be happy.

(Ecclesiastes 7:4) The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning,

While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.”

Well, throw a party and see how many geniuses you get out of that. But it really is in the difficult times that men begin to reflect and think about things. Obviously, as he

goes on within the chapter, God has made them both. But fundamentally, there are the vicissitudes of life in which we have these mainly down times and God begins to work in our life. It is during that time in which there aren't trials that you begin to wonder about the legitimacy of your faith, when everything's going well.

25 years have passed, basically. Now, God visits Abraham with a test. It's a very interesting moment. It's a defining moment within the passage. And as you turn back there to Genesis 22, we come to this moment of making a decision. We come to this moment in which God will test him. Now, the word "test" is a word to be noted. It oftentimes, and I think interestingly enough, King James translates it as "tempted". God was tempting. But we know, according to James 1, that would be an erroneous view because God does not tempt anyone to do evil. In James 1, it's very clear within that passage. What is to be noted is that the word itself is oftentimes translated "tempted" and sometimes translated "tested" or "tried". You have the similar situation in James 1:2, and then you go into verse 13; you have the same word that is used for

“trials,” and then you go on a little bit further, and it's the same word used for “tempted”. So, the point of the matter is, it depends on how the word is used and the context in which the word is used that defines whether it is a temptation or it is a trial. The word itself is oftentimes perceived as both. I would say that a temptation, fundamentally, is that which you're drawn to do that is wrong. So, if, in fact, you're not drawn to do wrong, there is no temptation. It is a test. But if, in fact, your desire is to do the right thing, then God is testing you. So, really, the temptation of Christ is not the temptation of Christ, it's the testing of Christ. And we see that within the passage. Interesting, this word is fundamentally a word that makes reference to something being tested with the quality of what it is. And so, you could actually probably even put in there the word “touchstone”. Have you ever heard of that word “touchstone”? You’ve probably seen it on some of the movies, which from what I understand is basically a black rock that is used to test the value of another metal, so specifically a precious metal, such as gold. So, what you do is you rub it on the black rock and then you pour acid on it, and then it reveals whether or

not it's precious gold. That's a process that should be noted. You pour acid on it, think about that. And that reveals. So, it's the rubbing and the pouring of acid. And you're trying to find out and verify the quality of that particular object or the purity or the authenticity, whether or not that is gold. That's what you're trying to find out. And this is what God is doing with testing. He is testing the authenticity of what is there. He is oftentimes bringing in acid in our lives to see. And really, when you think about the different passages of Scripture that make reference to this, in James 1, "Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials or testing, knowing that the testing of your faith is producing endurance." In other words, how do you respond in this? And 1 Peter 1 will make the same reference that you'll come out pure as gold in the process of the testing, the fiery ordeals that you go through will prove itself whether or not you're true, the quality of your faith. And it really is about the quality of your faith, isn't it? Because anybody can say that they believe, even the demons say that there's a God. They believe and they shake. But the question is, do you have a saving faith? In other words, when it came

right down to it, would you choose that which is most valuable to you or would you choose God? And would He become that which is most valuable to you in that decision? That's the test.

As we come to this passage, the test is given. One sage actually puts it this way as he defines the difference between temptation and testing. I like the way that he put it. It reads this way, "Temptation says, 'Do this pleasant thing. Do not be hindered by the fact that it is wrong.' Testing says, 'Do this right and noble thing. Do not be hindered by the fact that it is painful.'" Abraham's going to be tested in a very painful way. The question is, will he pass the test? This is not an unusual thing for God to do.

If you look with me in Exodus 16, you see God and it uses the same word within the passage that He's going to test the children of Israel. In a strange way, He tests them with this thing called "manna," bread from heaven. Pick up with me in Exodus 16 and read with me in verse 4.

(Exodus 16:4) "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall

go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction."

"Will they do what I tell them to do? Pick it up every day. I'm going to give you enough. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Don't hoard it. Don't leave it. Pick it up."

You know, you think about the different things that God commands us to do. Baptism. "Why do I need to get baptized?" What did God tell you to do? I know people try to figure it out. "What really does it matter anyway?" Did He tell you to do it? The whole concept of baptism is really kind of strange that you go someplace and get dipped in water and you come back up and that's it. It just seems kind of strange, but God says, "Will you do that?" I mean, for some people, God says, "Be dipped in Jordan." They go, "Well, that's kind of dirty. Can we find some cleaner places?" "No, Jordan." Will you do what He says? That's the question; whether it's baptism or tithing, or whether or not it's actually gathering together with the saints. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves. Will you do what He says? Simple question.

If you look at the passage, it doesn't seem like they did too well.

It reads this way in verse 20,

(Exodus 16:20) “But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them.”

In Deuteronomy 8, you see a similar scenario in which God, once again, is testing.

It reads this way in Deuteronomy 8,

(Deuteronomy 8:1) “All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers.

(Deuteronomy 8:2) You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you...”

It literally means to weaken and cause you to bow down.

“... testing you...”

“*Nāsâ*,” same word that was used with Abraham.

“... to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

(Deuteronomy 8:3) He humbled you and let you be hungry...”

“Why would He let me go without food? Why am I going through this?” You know, there are different things in people's minds, different things that happen in people's lives. Why would God do this? You hear this question given so many times, “Why would God do this to me?” I have a very good answer for that. “I don't know.” How would I know why God would do that to you? I know that He's drawing you closer to Him. I know that He's orchestrating good, and I know that He's testing your faith. But why in this area? Only you would know that. Maybe that's something really valuable. Is that something really valuable? Yes. Okay. Well, that's the answer to my question. Because God's wanting to know, “Do you love Me more than these?” Wasn't that the question in John to Peter, “What do you love most?” And there's going to come a time in your life, a defining moment in your life, in which God's going to come before you and He's going to

knock on the door and He's going to go, "You know, it's been a while, but let Me ask you this simple question." And I think all of us are going to have to face it. And I don't care what you said you did; I don't care if you walked down the aisle; I don't care if you did something "grand" for God. The question is, did you know Him? As Matthew 7 would say. It doesn't matter about all the grand things that you've done in His name. The question is, do you love Him?

And how is that going to be revealed? Well, John 15, Jesus turns to His disciples, and He says, "Look, greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. I'm laying down My life for you." John 10, "I'm the good shepherd. I lay down My life for My sheep." Now, the question is given to the disciples, "Do you love Me? If you love Me, you'll do what I say; you'll keep My commandments." And that will mean that you will have to love Him more than anything. You can't love God... well, you can't serve God and mammon. You can't have two gods. Right? I mean, you either love the one, cling to

it, or repel it. But you can't have two. And God is causing you to deal with the legitimacy of the test.

God's grace is abundant from the beginning of the giving of life and all the things that He gave to Adam and Eve, if you look in the garden. I mean, it was all about pleasure and bliss and all those things. But man sinned. The thought is, "Wow, that was something that God wasn't expecting." But no, He had planned this from the beginning. Because in the process, He's now reconciling man back to Himself. And you go, "Okay, so God is heading back and bringing man back to the garden the way things were meant to be." No. No, He's not. He's bringing man back to something better than it was. Because when you consider the whole thing of the garden, the whole thing of the garden was about man receiving. He was a recipient. There's no doubt about it. He was a recipient of God's grace. He was a recipient of God's blessings. I mean, everything was great, but he had no depth of character. He had no understanding of love. He had never had to sacrifice. He had never had to give. He never had to suffer pain for somebody. He could not

and he would not love. Oh, God's going to take man; He's going to bring him back, all right. But He's going to bring him back, not as a recipient, but as a son.

It kind of reminds me of the Book of Philemon, a very simple book in which Onesimus steals from Philemon. And through the process of time, here again, perhaps a serendipitous moment. Obviously, the sovereign hand of God brings Paul together with Onesimus in prison. Small world, huh? And here he receives the Lord, and Paul writes back to Philemon, "You know, you want to open your arms and receive Onesimus back. Would you do that?" He said, "And listen, this time not as one of your servants, but now as a brother." The difficult times in our life will bring us to a point of depth in our relationship. God is not concerned with you being superficial. He's not interested in you by verbatim saying words. What God is looking for is the genuineness of your heart, and He's going to test you. He's going to put you up against the acid test, and He's going to find, "Is this person real? Are they genuine? Do you love Me?" "Yes." "We'll see." He does it with Peter. Peter says, "I'll never leave You." And

Jesus says, "We'll see." And the wonderful thing is that in all cases, we all realize that we all fail in many ways; that even when it came right down to it, it would almost be impossible for us to have the fortitude to do what is necessary. I mean, could you raise a knife to your kid? Could you do that? It would almost seem like an impossible event to do, unless there was a greater power within me. And that's the wonderful thing about our salvation. The wonderful thing about our salvation is it takes our desires, it actually gives us the power to fulfill those desires, to have a relationship with God, and to stand firm until the end, if you consider the Book of Hebrews. If you stand firm in your faith to the end, then you pass the test. And there are going to be moments in your life we're going to be tested.

This passage actually begins with,

(Genesis 22:1) "Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am.""

"I'm not trying to hide from You. I'm not trying to dodge the bullet. I'm not trying to make this easier on myself."

Testing says, “Do this right and noble thing. Do not be hindered by the fact that it is painful.” And he made himself available to God.

This whole process of this particular story and this particular event, we're going to be looking at in detail. God is going to choose a place for him, and God chooses these places in our lives to make that decision. By the way, that's what “Moriah” means, “the place that God chooses.” And God is going to choose this place and He's going to do a work. And we're going to see just how Abraham walks by faith. It's no wonder that Romans 4 will tell us that Abraham is a father of faith because he lays his son on that altar.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Well, Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to search our hearts, try our minds; see if there be any evil way within us. Evil in the sense of being deceptive with ourselves; to say one thing, and yet, not to do it. How is it that we could actually believe? We realize that in all of our lives, Father, that You will orchestrate a defining

moment in which we will have to make a decision, whether it be those things that we hold most precious or You. A moment of letting go; a moment of embracing.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. What we're asking you to do, what Scripture is asking you to do, is get serious with what you say. Don't just throw out the words, "Believe" and "faith". It does not matter. In the Gospel of Luke, some will come to Jesus, and they'll go, "Are there just a few that are being saved?" Jesus will say, "Narrow is the door, the path, but broad is the way of destruction." I don't know, you define that. What we're asking you to do is examine yourselves. Or as Paul will say in 2 Corinthians 13, test yourself to see if you have the faith.