Abraham's Ultimate Test of Faith

(Genesis 22:1-19)
9/6/98

Introduction:

**** Do you have the faith that it takes to pass the big tests of life?***

Real Faith that passes the big tests is …

I. OBEDIENT to God's Commands (v.3-4)

[Abraham <u>did</u> (through faith) what God told him to do]

Real Faith that passes the big tests is …

II. RELIANT on God's Promises (v.5-10)

[Abraham <u>saw</u> (through faith) what God wanted him to see]

Real Faith that passes the big tests is …

III. REWARDED by God's Faithfulness (v.11-19)

[Abraham <u>received</u> (through faith) what God wanted him to receive]

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Introduction:

v. 1
"God did tempt Abraham" - Not a solicitation to sin in the sense of gratifying an inward lust (for God does not tempt in that way – James 1:13). But a test of Abraham's faith. The ultimate test!

We have the vantage point of seeing that this was only a test. As far as Abraham knew, this was not just a test, but a real sacrifice of his son.

"Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible." (EX: Joseph in prison or Moses at the Red Sea, etc.) (Wiersbe, p. 110).

"Behold, here I am" - "At your service, Lord." "I'm all ears." Does God get our full attention as He speaks via His written word?

**** Do you have the faith that it takes to pass the big tests of life?***

Real Faith that passes the big tests is …

I. OBEDIENT to God's Commands (v.3-4)

[Abraham did (through faith) what God told him to do]

v. 2
Faith obeys!

"Thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" – With every phrase, God intensifies the close relationship Abraham had with his son.

Hebrews 11:17-19 -
By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Heb.11:17

"The promises" - God's unconditional promises:

1) That Abraham's descendents would be as numerous as the stars of the heaven (Gen. 15:5).

2) I will *"multiply thee exceedingly"* (Gen. 17:2)

3) Gen. 17:19 - *"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him."*

The proof of Abraham's faith was his willingness (even after a century of waiting and wondering) to give back to God the treasure he had, the son of promise (MacArthur, p. 335).

God's intention was to see if Abraham loved Him more than he loved Isaac.

"Only begotten" - (cp. Jn. 3:16) - here is a proof that the term *"monogenes"* refers to uniqueness not origin, because Isaac, in fact, was not Abraham's only son; he also had Ishmael before Isaac was born, and he had other children by Keturah, who Abraham married after Sarah's death (Gen. 25:1-6).

Heb.11:19

Although Isaac did not die on the altar, his rising up off of it serves as a "figure" or type of Christ's rising from the dead.

The offering of Isaac was not only a test of faith, but that event served as a type or foreshadowing of God offering up His only begotten (unique) son.

The mountain of Moriah (Gen. 22:2) was the same location (in Jerusalem) where Solomon's temple was built (II Chron. 3:1) and sacrifices were made, and where the Messiah (Jesus Christ) would eventually be sacrificed.

"Offer him there for a burnt offering" - There was not yet a law on the books forbidding child sacrifice; this would later, in the days of Moses, be prohibited in the Law (Deut. 12:31, 18:10; Lev. 18:21) and only pagans would practice it (2 Kings 3:26; Jer. 7:31; Micah 6:7). However, at this time, God was not asking Abraham to violate a specific law.

v. 3
When is obedience really obedience? We see in Abraham that he obeyed God:

1) Without delay (Immediately) – God says "now" (v. 2) and Abraham obeyed "early in the morning" (at the crack of dawn Abraham was cracking wood). Delayed obedience is not obedience.

2) Without question – Abraham believed God enough not to question Him when asked to offer Isaac.

3) Without complaint – If anyone ever could feel justified in arguing about a divine order, it would have been Abraham.

4) With precision – He did exactly what he was told. As hard as it must have been, Abraham took God literally and prepared for the sacrifice.

5) At great cost (sacrificially) – He would give up that which was most precious to him, his greatest treasure. Abraham, an old man, would have to travel 50 miles (a three-day journey) from Beersheba to the area of Jerusalem.

6) Completely – He obeyed thoroughly, doing every detail God commanded.

God's commanding Abraham to offer up Isaac seemed inconsistent with God's promise to raise up a numerous nation (Gen. 15:5, 17:2) through Isaac (Gen. 17:19) – yet Abraham believed and obeyed, and by his sacrificial obedience proved that his faith of the last 30 years was real.

Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac was the one event James pointed to when he proved in James 2 that faith—real, living faith—produces works.

Abraham was "justified" or proven to be righteous by his works, particularly his work of offering up Isaac (James 2:21-24 - Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.)

Real Faith that passes the big tests is …

II. RELIANT on God's Promises (v.5-10)

[Abraham saw (through faith) what God wanted him to see]

Faith trusts!

v. 5

"I and the lad . . . will come again to you" – Abraham was so confident that God would fulfill the promises He made concerning Isaac, that he knew Isaac would return, even if it meant returning back to life after death.

"In the final analysis Isaac would be brought twice from the dead, once from Sarah's dead womb and once again from the high altar. The book of Hebrews suggests that Abraham concluded that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead (11:19). Whether Abraham had actually worked out the details of a bodily resurrection would be hard to say. People in the ancient world believed that life would continue beyond the grave, but a clear understanding of resurrection to this life began to unfold only later." (Ross, p. 298).

Note: "Worship" here is not defined as receiving from God or even praying to God, but the essence of worship is giving to God. We worship God by giving God adoration, obedience, and sacrifice.

v. 6

It would only be father and son at the sacrifice. No one else would have any involvement. Why? Because Isaac was typifying Christ's future sacrifice which would be an ordeal just between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father would lay on Him (Jesus the son) the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:6, 10).

v. 8

"God will provide himself a lamb" – In the immediate sense, Abraham could see God providing the sacrifice for Himself; in the ultimate sense (although he had no way of comprehending all of the details that would be involved), Abraham could see God providing the ultimate Lamb for Himself ("the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – Jn. 1:29).

Abraham here speaks mysteriously and prophetically of God's future provision of an atoning sacrifice for sin.

"God will provide himself" – With no help from anyone, God (*Jehovah Jirah* – v. 14) would provide His own sacrifice. Nothing we offer is efficacious. God's own lamb is all He needs, and all He wants! We dare not add to His work! No other sacrifice will do!

It wasn't the Jews, nor the Romans who crucified Jesus. It was God the Father, who did so to make an atoning sacrifice for our sins!

God gave us His son (Rom. 8:32 - He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?)

v. 9
"The place which God had told him of" - Mt. Moriah.

Abraham would have climbed to the highest peak for this sacrifice. Presently, this peak is the area known as Gordon's Calvary, where General Gordon discovered a skull-shaped quarried mountain, where it is believed Jesus was crucified.

Mount Moriah – God's place of Sacrifice

1. Moriah was the mountain God told Abraham to offer His son, Isaac. (Genesis 22)

2. Moriah was the mountain God told David to Build an Altar to stop the Death Angel from destroying the Israelites
(II Samuel 24:18-f)

3. Moriah was the mountain God chose to put His name there and to build the Temple for sacrifices (Deut.12:5,11,14,18; 16:6; II Chron 3:1; II Sam.24:16-24)

4. Moriah was the Mountain God chose to sacrifice His Son upon for the sin of the world
(John 19:17)

Abraham had such a trust in God and such a consistent testimony lived out in front of Isaac his son, that he had his son's <u>complete trust</u> (real faith is <u>respected</u>).

Isaac's confidence in Abraham is amazing. Without giving a fight or argument, Isaac submits to his authority and allows his dad to bind him and place him on the altar.

Real Faith that passes the big tests is …

III. REWARDED by God's Faithfulness (v.11-19)

[Abraham <u>received</u> (through faith) what God wanted him to receive]

v. 11

This **"angel (messenger) of the LORD"** is a theophany (an appearance of God's Son) because He <u>speaks</u> as God (note v. 12 – "from Me"); He <u>identifies</u> Himself as God (note v. 15-16) and He claims the <u>prerogatives</u> of God (v. 17)

v. 12

It was never God's intention to have Abraham slay his son; He simply wanted to <u>prove</u> his faith and to provide a <u>foreshadowing</u> of God offering up "His only begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16).

"I know that thou fearest God" – Abraham's deep reverence for God was anchored in his real faith in God. Faith respects God enough to give Him anything He asks for.

When we hold back on God, it is due to the fact that we don't fear (respect) God, which is due to the fact that our faith is either non-existent or weak.

v. 13

Perhaps the ram was there al the time, but Abraham never saw it until God opened his eyes (cp. Gen. 21:19).

"In the stead of his son" – The idea of substitutionary sacrifice goes all the way back to the beginning of time (after the fall in the garden).

Just as God provided a sacrifice instead of Abraham's son, He has provided a sacrifice instead of you. Jesus took your place and paid your penalty on the cross.

v. 14

"Jehovah-Jireh" – "The Lord will see to it" or "The Lord will provide." And He did so, when Christ died on this very Mount Moriah.

v. 17

God promises Abraham:

1. <u>Blessing</u>

   Blessing always comes to those who don't hold back from God. When we give Him what He asks for, He gives back in immeasurable amounts!

2. <u>Descendents</u>

   Numerous like the stars of the sand.

3. Power

To be fulfilled by the conquest of Canaan under Joshua.

4. Global Influence

As Christ, the ultimate seed, which would flow from Isaac, would bless the world.

Gal. 3:8, 16 – And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Conclusion:

God tests the faithfulness of believers by asking them to surrender to him the best they have (v. 1-2)

What God asked may have seemed unreasonable, unimaginable, or out of character.

Isaac was the best gift Abraham had in life (he was to be the heir). Give him to God?! What a test!

Abraham had already grievously relinquished Ishmael. Now Isaac? How could God ask such a thing?

Luke 14:26-27 - If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

When God says, “Let go” it is painful.

Categories to be held loosely:
--Possessions
--Businesses, occupations, and projects
--Plans and dreams
--People and relationships (Chuck Swindoll, p. 123)

Lessons for today:
1) What you retain for yourself is usually what God asks you to release to Him

2) What you release to God, He replaces with something even ,more valuable
(Chuck Swindoll, p. 128)

What is God worthy of?

My Lord deserves ...

The best of my devotion

My best in Prayer
My best in Bible Study
My best in Singing
My best in Giving
My best in Loving

(Mt.10:37-38 - He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.)

The best of my ability

My strength
My talent
My youth (Eccl.12:1)

The best of my time

The best use of my moments ("Redeeming the time…" – Eph.5:16)
The best of my week (Sunday = the first day of the week)

The best of my work ethic

(Eph. 6:5-7 - Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men)

The best of my conduct

(a conscientious lifestyle)

1Thess.2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.
Eph.4:1 - I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called
Col.1:10 - That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

The best of my study and ministry preparation

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.