

God Tests Our Faith to Prove He Provides

Genesis 22:1-19



THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you alone can bring the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, on God now and forever. Amen.



SERMON OUTLINE

Moses explores in Genesis 22 the tension between God's promises and the trials that test our faith in His faithfulness. Through Abraham's testing, God demonstrates His provision and reveals an essential truth about worshiping Him: He cannot be controlled, and we must submit our hopes and desires to His all-consuming fire. Abraham's willingness to surrender Isaac models true devotion to God. As we encounter trials in life, the final sermon in our series on "The Life of Abraham" presents challenging and profound teachings on how to overcome them.

God's tests are a manifestation of His loving care for His children and lead to profound transformations of faith. In Genesis 22, we discover that even in the face of great challenges, God is committed to fitting us for Himself.



Being tested by God is not like taking a written exam to see how much you know. It's more like a piece of metal being put into fire. In the heat, the quality of the metal is revealed; but also, through the heat the metal is purified and reshaped. God's testing never aims to destroy, but to refine and refashion.

God tests us to shape and uncover our true selves, but even more importantly, to reveal His own nature and capacity to provide for us. Through testing, we can experience firsthand that God is a provider and can be relied upon.

God Tests Faith v. 1-7

- o God tests his people, especially those who have faith.
 - Non-believers may experience conviction but not testing.
 - We should not be surprised that the path of obedience to God is met with different headwinds than the path of disobedience
- o God tests happen through real-life experiences.
 - Abraham must not only verbally agree to sacrifice Isaac, he must *do it*.
- o God's testing reaches to what we love most.
 - In sacrificing Isaac, Abraham must be willing to put his whole heart on the altar.
- o God's testing may involve Godforsakenness.
 - By asking him to give up Isaac, it seems God has led Abraham to Golgotha.
- o Reasons God Tests Us
 - Form us: God uses testing to shape and form us.
 - Reveals us: Testing reveals our true faith and character.
 - In a church family we need those who have tried-and-tested-faith.

God provides for those He Tests v. 8-19

- o Abraham's statement in verse 8 is prophetic and profound, and God provides a substitute to die, so Isaac (God's people!) can live
 - God is preparing us for the Gospel, where God will provide a substitute to die, so that His people can live
- o The events of Genesis 22 reveal the heart of God's love and how far God will go to save lost humanity
 - God ultimately provides a ram caught in the thicket as a substitute for the sacrifice.
 - This event foreshadows the provision of God's ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, who dies so that humanity may have eternal life.
 - Throughout the Old Testament, God prepares people to understand the gospel and His plan to uphold justice and extend mercy to sinful humanity, which is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God.
- o God's ultimate test for us is meant to bring us to the end of ourselves, the end of all earthly and human hope, but not to crush us
 - God removes from us the cup of earthly joys, so that he can take us to the fountain of living water and teach us to drink from His fount of divine fellowship
- o God tests us to prove that He can and will provide.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In times of testing, how has God been revealing your true self to you, and what actions are you taking based on these revelations?
- Have you gone through a difficult time of testing? Perhaps you are currently experiencing such a season. How can the testing and the testimony of those who have come through similar seasons serve to strengthen others in the community? In what ways might this principle help individuals reframe their times of testing in light of their belonging to a larger community?
- What are some "Isaacs" in your life, the things that you love most and that, if things went wrong with them, would threaten to crush your faith? How can these good godly "Isaacs," beloved aspects, people, or things in your life, be strengthened and rightly ordered by the teaching of Genesis 22 that God provides?
- How is the statement "the Lord will provide for himself a lamb" in verse 7 connected to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross in the New Testament? And how does this understanding that God provided both the Lamb and, in Christ, is the Lamb, affect your understanding of Christian truth and the Gospel?
- How does a comprehensive understanding of God's nature, as revealed in Holy Scripture, including His character and plan, give us an advantage over Abraham's Job-like situation? And how can this knowledge of God's character, particularly in Christ, assist us when facing life situations that challenge our understanding?



Do you not think that it did Abraham great good in assuring his own heart and enabling him to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that he really did fear and love God?... would it not be worthwhile to pass through some tremendous trouble, to get that settled once and for all? I do think that the Lord gives some of his people full-assuring tribulations, so that when once these are past, all doubting and fearing, are at an end.
-- Charles Spurgeon



PRAYER

Almighty God, You are our Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. Help us trust in Your provision and recognize the ways You provide for us, whether in the form of a ram in the thicket or the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus Christ. Give us faith to see Your hand in all things and to rest in Your loving care. May we be bold in our faith, like Abraham, and willing to obey You even when it is difficult, and may we be made ready and fit to dwell with you in the kingdom of God, now and forever. Amen.



Further Study

- C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed
- In the days of Jeremiah, God says of the rebellious sons of Judah, "They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind." (Jer 7:31).
- R. W. L. Moberly, "Christ as the Key to Scripture: Genesis 22 Reconsidered," pages 143-173 in *He Swore an Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12-50*, second edition (Wipf & Stock, Eugene, Oregon: 1994), 157.
- Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Revised Edition (Westminster Press, Philadelphia: 1976), 244.
- Charles Spurgeon, "Abraham's Trial: A Lesson for Believers."
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/genesis/>