

Genesis 22:1-14 Your Test Points to Christ's Cross

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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." ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

(Pastor prays)

Each of you came in this morning with your own concept of who God is and how He works, and in this passage, we find some of the most profound concepts about God in the whole Bible. In fact, this story is more carefully and artistically written than any

other passage in Genesis. Here we have the greatest and best-known test of Abraham's long life. It's the last great drama for the old patriarch, and in this drama of God's Word you will find the most important principle in the Bible, the principle of atonement.

This is the simple Gospel of Jesus that Billy Graham gave his life to and we commit this church to: that Jesus died in the place of sinners. Genesis 22 is pageant and prophesy of the actual sacrifice of Jesus. But not only that; we see the gut-wrenching story of a man being tested: his faith, his sanity, his emotional capacity to carry on – all of it – tested.

This passage points us to Christ. In it Abraham shows us the meaning of faith and trusting God despite all evidence to the contrary. When you read the story, at every turn the real love between a father and his son is forced on us so that when we read it, we might feel how terrible the task was that was laid on him and how hard that task is that is laid on you. And as impossible as it might sound and feel, this passage is challenging us to hold all other loves, all other passions, all other people, to hold them less than the love you have for God, to know that this life is a test, and here is the truth:

Every Test Points Us to Christ

All of our tests point us to Christ. Let's walk through the passage.

We find out on the front end what's going on here. It's right there in print in verse 1: *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."*

God tested Abraham like He will test you and develop you. The pain is there to show you that His grace is sweet and His love is real and on display when you are weak and He is strong. Listen to the sad poetry in verse 2. Listen to how it is written to remind us of the pain involved.

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."

Four times - Take now 1) your son, 2) your only son, 3) Isaac, 4) the one you love. Offer him as a burnt offering. Everything you waited for, everything you dreamed about, all

the promises – Say Abraham! Do you love the gift or the giver more? Do you love God or the blessings of God more? Is Christ enough for you? When the cancer isn't curable, or you are cheated on or you are broke or fail at something, is He enough? In the text, we feel the love Abraham has for his son reminding us that God the father loves His son Jesus infinitely more.

Back to the story. Abraham gets the call in verse 2. In the next three verses we get a glimpse at Abraham's faith. There are three kinds of faith:

Unhesitating Faith

So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

The next day Abraham did exactly what God called him to do. He got up early – obeying immediately, doing the difficult without delay. Some of you have a hard obedience that you have been putting off. You know the right thing. Abraham's faith was unhesitating.

Persevering Faith

Verse 4 - *On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.*

Three days they rode or walked together. No music, no videos, no games to play on the phone – they had to *talk*. All the while, Abraham is carrying the anxiety of knowing what awaits them. Three days is an eternity when you are dreading something. This is the faith that keeps you *praying* as a parent and *staying* as a spouse. You don't need faith when the sun is shining. You need faith when you are walking in the dark, a persevering faith.

Saving Faith

Verse 5 – They get to the spot, and notice what Abraham says. *Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."*

Now listen to what the writer of Hebrews says about that. Hebrews 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the*

promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

He believed God and that's what I want to ask you to do today. In your heart, make for God a throne and crown Him the king and demand that all other passions bow down to the ruler.

The story continues in verse 6 and sets us up for the work of Christ. *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.*

Even the Jewish commentators would say he is like a man with a cross on his back. Isaac carries the wood and in verse 7-8, there is a conversation. In Hebrews there is a six-word question: Where is the Lamb for the burnt offering? (This is) A foreshadowing of John the Baptist saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." God supplies His own son instead of Abraham's son.

In verse 8, Abraham gives the clearest answer on God's provision for us at Calvary. *Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.* In verse 9-10, Abraham puts his son of the promise, that symbolizes everything he's lived for and believed in, he put him on the altar. And in verse 10, when Abraham takes the knife to slay his son, he is made to realize the intense love of the Father who spared not His own son but gave Him up to death on a cross.

In verse 11-12, the drama builds, and the Lord stops him. And then in verse 13, the ram is provided. *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.*

This is a vivid representation of the Gospel of Jesus. A ransom is found for the doomed and condemned and an acceptable substitute is put in the condemned's place. This brings me to how this story is a foreshadowing of the cross and what this actually means, and to do so I want to borrow from Jared Wilson in his book *Gospel Deeps*. Let me give you five words to explain the cross of Christ.

- 1) Mediation – There is a gulf between us and God filled with His wrath owed to us for our sin. At the cross, the sinless Christ bridges the gulf between us and God by covering our sin.
- 2) Condemnation – Christ the mediator stands in the place of the condemned, not just handling our sin but taking it upon Himself as an object of sacrifice. He accepts the place of guilt in order to exchange His innocence.
- 3) Propitiation – A blood debt is owed - legally speaking - because without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sins; and until the price is paid, the condemned remain under the justified wrath of God. We cannot make this payment because we are morally bankrupt. So, at the cross, Jesus makes the payment.
- 4) Justification – Right standing before God. At the cross, Christ's perfect obedience culminated in our full pardon. We, for whom there was no justification, are now justified.
- 5) Imputation – There is a crediting to accounts both ways. At the cross, Christ takes the sin out of our account and puts it in His as He becomes condemned on the cross, but in doing that, He transfers His innocence to the account of those who are actually guilty.

This results in –

- 6) Reconciliation – The gulf is bridged, the wrath is appeased, the debt is cancelled, the soul is cleansed.

The wide-open arms of Christ on the cross reveal to us the means of the Father embracing His once lost children. Through the cross, Christ reconciles us to God.

My plea with any of you today who are not Christians is: be reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus.

Today we remember the cross through taking The Lord's Supper.

(Pastor explains The Lord's Supper and prays)