

# Covenant Tested

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] sin problem. He would come and he would put an end to sin himself because he would separate the world into the godly and the ungodly seed. And from the godly seed would come one who would crush the head of the serpent. And so God has been protecting and guiding and moving this godly seed and he has been thinning it out until he comes down to one man, this one man, Abraham, to whom he gave great promises. But the promises looked as though they would never be fulfilled. And Abraham learned a valuable lesson from the Lord that God is enough. But you see, that's not enough for us. Because it's one thing to say that God is enough.

And it's another to deeply believe it. So we come to chapter 22. We're going to read verses 1 through verse 14. I'm going to ask you if you have found your place, if you would, in honor of the Lord's word, would you stand with me as we read?

After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, Here am I. 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. So Abraham rose early in the morning and 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. On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 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. 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. And Isaac said to his father, Abraham, my father.

And he said, Here am I, my son. He said, Behold the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt offering? Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. So they went, both of them together. When they came to the place 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. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. 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. 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. So Abraham called the place, the name of that place, the Lord will provide.

[ 3 : 2 6 ] As it is said to this day on the mountain of the Lord, it shall be provided. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it is sharper than a two-edged sword.

And our prayer is that you would use it to carve out the sin of our heart, that you would remove the evil motivations and intentions of our hearts, that you would use it for grace, that we might grow in grace, that we might grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be sanctified by your truth, washed in the water of your word, to be able to be presented together as your body before you, blameless, without spot, without blemish. We might radiate the splendor of your glory.

Father, do for us what seems foolish. Use the preaching of the word to build your church.

In the name of Christ, amen. Amen. When I begin, I don't know how many of them will help me out here, but all of the children that are in here, age 10 and below, will you help me with something this morning?

I just need you simply to stand up where you are. There. There's two. Anyone else? There's two. There's one. Go ahead. Go back over there and then you can stand up. Yeah. All right. We got a couple in the back. I see that hand. Yes.

[ 5 : 10 ] All right. Here's what I want you to do. We're going to play a little bit of a game. I'm going to ask you some questions and all you have to do is answer it. Yes or no. You're not going to speak out your answer. The way you're going to answer the question is if the answer is yes, you remain standing. If the answer is no, you sit down. Pretty easy, right? Once you have sat down, stay seated until it looks like nobody else is going to sit down or everybody sit down and we're done. All right.

So with that in mind, here's the first question. The first question would be this. Would you be willing to go play a game with me? If the answer is yes, stay standing. If the answer is no, you can sit down. That's okay. His dad's from the north. They don't follow instructions very well, so it's okay. Now, so everybody's still standing. Second question is this. Would you be willing to go play a game with me outside? Okay, there's still some yeses there. I don't see any no's. Well, nope, nope. There might be a no. That might be more from shyness than a no. Who knows? Next question then. We've still got a few standing, so we've got to keep going. Would you be willing to go play a game with me outside in the road?

Wow, that didn't take long at all. Are you still standing? You are? Is anyone else still standing? Justice? Oh, thank you. You're still standing. All right. I have more questions. Would you be willing to play a game with me outside in the road in which I tie you up and leave you in the road?

Justice? Justice, you're still standing, aren't you? Let's try another question. Here we go. You ready? Would you be willing to play a game with me outside in the road in which I tie you up and leave you in the road and a car is in the road? I can roll. So, yes? Okay. All right. You're the last one standing, I do believe. You can have a seat now. Now, thank you, Becky. What we have here in Genesis chapter 22 is just that. It's a test. If you look in Genesis 22 verse 1, it says God tested Abraham.

If you turn to a parallel passage in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 17, you see there that it says, by faith Abraham when he was tested. This was a test. What kind of a test was it? It was a test of Abraham's faith. Now, so that we don't get confused here and we begin to think that Abraham is the hero of the story because you and I need to understand that no human being is ever the hero of the story.

[ 8 : 22 ] God is the hero of the story. This is not a story about Abraham's faith. This is a story about how trustworthy God is. You see, these kids, when I mentioned playing in the road, what happened? Well, they sat down. Why is that? Because they're not exactly sure what it is the crazy man up in the front is going to do. They're not sure that that's a safe thing. And why would somebody like me put them in a position unsafe? You know, the road I was thinking about was the U-shaped driveway in front of my house. And the car was the one that I was going to park across the driveway so nobody would pull up into my driveway. But did they know that? No, because they don't know me, because they haven't spent time with me, because they don't know if maybe I just say crazy things just because I like to say crazy things, or maybe perhaps I'm some sort of sadistic crazy person who would do something very crazy and dangerous. They don't know me. Their willingness to play the game or not is dependent upon what they view of me as being a trustworthy person.

You see, I tested them, and my testing of them showed what they really believed about me. God tested Abraham, and the test was really about what does Abraham believe about God. It's not one of these things that we're thinking, wow, Abraham's got such strong faith. Look at that. Look at those faith muscles. I mean, he can move mountains with those things. It's not that kind of a test. It's not the kind of test where, you know, if Abraham's child was sick, and he prayed, his child got well, but my child got sick, and I prayed, and it didn't get well, because, you know, he's got more faith than me. It's not that kind of a test. Faith isn't something that we can muscle up next to one another and compare. We can't look at one another and say, hmm, you know, my faith is stronger than yours. We just can't do that kind of a thing. That's not the kind of test this is. This is a test in which faith, faith, faith always holds something. What is your faith in? What are you holding with your faith?

faith. God tested Abraham. And you see, we begin to ask ourselves a lot of questions about this passage because this passage is brought up again in another New Testament passage in James chapter 2, where James says this. He says, faith without works is dead. Now, we're in a Baptist church, so we've got to be careful with this because when we start talking about faith and works, we begin to get a little nervous and scared because we don't want anybody thinking that they're going to earn their way to heaven. But beloved, you need to read James chapter 2 because you need to understand what's going on.

He says, faith without works is dead. He even says, you show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works. He says, what does Abraham, our father, find in this? He's justified by works, it says. What? He's justified by works? Yeah, because you see, the whole point that James is getting after is this. There are some who have a say-so faith, and then there are some who have a do-so faith. You see, there are some who profess all day long about God, and I believe this, and this, and this, and this, and this, and this, and yet there's no action to prove it.

The writer, James, goes to Abraham's story of Isaac and says that he believed God, and it was fulfilled, what Scripture had said, that he believed God and was credited to him as righteousness.

[ 12 : 37 ] What that means is this. Abraham proved that he already had faith in God because he obeyed God. Do you understand what I'm saying? What I'm saying is this. If we just profess, we just confess, we just say, I'm a Christian. If I die, I'm going to go to heaven. We can profess this stuff all day long, and we can profess all kinds of things. I could profess to be a Big Mac, but that doesn't make me a Big Mac.

I could profess anything I want to, but Paul Washer. Is anybody familiar with the name Paul Washer? Paul Washer is an evangelist who used to be a missionary overseas, and he gives a great illustration of this.

And the illustration is this. He said, what would happen if today, as I came to speak, I walked in about 20 minutes late. You guys were sitting here, and there's no music going on, and everybody's wondering, where's the preacher? What's going on? He's lost his mind.

And I get up here, all nice, prim, and proper, my suit shaved, hair done, and I said, you know, I'd have been here a lot earlier, but on my way, I was hit by a Big Mac truck. Bam.

And so it made me a little delayed. So I'm here now, so we can start. What would be the problem with that? Well, where's the tire tracks? Where's the grill print on the forehead? I mean, if you really had that happen, there's going to be evidence.

[ 14 : 18 ] And what we have in America today is we have a church that's full of people who have professed something, and there's absolutely nothing to prove that their profession is true.

The story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac is a test. It is a test to show, do you have just a say-so faith?

Just a, well, I really am a believer. I said this, and I said that, and I prayed this, and I prayed that, and I did all the right things. Or do you have a do-so faith? Is there evidence?

And I think, from reading this, that the test really takes about three forms. All of it has to do with take Isaac, sacrifice him, and there has to be this obedience.

But there's these three things that begin to just boil out of this story. And I want to put them to you this morning as some questions for your own heart.

[ 15 : 21 ] And the first question is this, do you believe God is faithful? Do you believe that God is faithful?

What is it that has been going on up to this point in Genesis 22? What's been going on is God has been promising promise after promise. As a matter of fact, listen to this list of promises.

In Genesis 12, 3, he was promised to be a great nation. In Genesis 12, 7, a land given to his descendants. In Genesis 13, 15, a land given to his descendants. In Genesis 13, 16, innumerable offspring.

In Genesis 15, 4, an heir born to Abraham. In Genesis 15, 5, innumerable offspring. In Genesis 15, 13 through 16, affliction of his offspring.

In bondage, 400 years and then deliverance. In Genesis 15, 18, the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. Genesis 17, 2 through 7, a covenant.

[ 16 : 24 ] God promised, I'll make a covenant between me and between you. And then he promised, I'm going to make a covenant between me and your offspring. In Genesis 17, 8, he promised to give the land to Abraham and his descendants.

In Genesis 17, 16, 19, and 21, he promised Sarah would have a son. And in Genesis 18, 10, and 14, again, he promises that Sarah will have a son.

You see, the promise is hinged upon what? All these promises, they're all hinged upon one thing. What is it? A son. A baby.

If you're going to have innumerable offspring, you've got to start at least with child number one. And then you can be like, you know, us. And you can have child number five eventually.

But you've got to at least start with one child. If you don't start with one, you don't have any. What about the great nation? Well, how can you be a great nation all by yourself, shriveled up at, you know, Abraham's age?

[ 17 : 25 ] How can you do that? You can't. You've got to have descendants. How can your descendants inherit this huge plot of land? They can't. You don't have it. There's got to be a son. And so in Genesis 21, a son comes.

And now, God says, kill him. I'm not going to mince words about it. Burnt offering is a burnt offering.

Don't try to pacify that. Don't try to, you know, make that look pretty like, well, how could God do such a thing? Beloved, let's just think about this for a second. Is Isaac the offspring of Adam?

Yes. Isaac's the offspring of Adam. No, he's the offspring of Abraham. You're confusing me. Okay, wait, back up. He's the offspring of Abraham, who's the offspring of Terah, who's the offspring of, and you go back down the line until you get to Adam.

So he's the offspring of Adam. So for God to say, offer your son as a burnt offering, Hey, I want you to understand something as much as this may not sit well with you.

[ 18 : 37 ] There is not a person born on the face of the planet that doesn't deserve to die. We deserve to die because we are Adam's offspring, and in Adam we rebelled against God.

And we prove that that's true because we continue to sin, and we are all headed to death. We want to do everything we can to keep from that, you know, from stretching the face to color the hair to working out a little bit more, doing everything we can to stretch ourselves away from that death, but it's coming.

So God says, kill Isaac. So Abraham's got a dilemma. God has promised all of these things, and it all hinges upon this son, and now he says, kill this son.

Do I believe that God is faithful? How is God going to fulfill his promise?

We see that Abraham believes that God is faithful. You see it in his statements where he says, the boy and I will go this distance, we'll worship, and we will return. But my question is to you.

[ 20 : 04 ] Do you believe in God's faithfulness? You see, you can answer that question. You can say, yes, I believe in God's faithfulness, and that is a profession.

My question is, what happens when God tells you to do something? What happens when you've got to go through a test?

What happens when you've got to put the rubber to the road, when you've got to actually do something? To show and prove the faithfulness of God. Think of his promises concerning his providence.

He says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. He says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. But have you ever asked yourself the question, God, where are you?

God, why is this so hard? Do you feel abandoned by God? Do you feel like God has let you down? Do you look at the situation that comes up in front of you, whatever difficulty it is, and do you look at it and do you say to yourself, God, what are you doing?

[ 21 : 20 ] You see, we can profess that God is faithful, but will we obey Him in the midst of difficulties? When it looks too hard, when it looks too difficult. Do you believe that God is faithful?

I think it boils up to another point. I think it boils up to the point of this question, and that is, do we love God most? What does He call Isaac?

Your only son whom you love. Will you take your only son whom you love, and will you be obedient to me, and will you offer him as a burnt offering?

You know, in Leviticus, it uses the term burnt offering a lot, right? If you don't know that, you can go through and read Leviticus, and you can see that. A burnt offering, they would take the lamb, and they would come, and they would lay their hands upon the head of the lamb, and they would confess their sin.

They would take a knife and slit its throat, slit it from one end to the other end, pull out all the insides, put it up on the altar, and set it on fire and burn it. God says, Abraham, take the son that you love, and offer him as a burnt offering.

[ 22 : 48 ] And you see, Isaac knew what a burnt offering was. You hear his question? We got the fire, we got the wood. Dad, where's the lamb? Why does he say that?

Because Abraham's been teaching him what a burnt offering is. Abraham's been showing him. Abraham's been doing this, so he would know. And now, all of a sudden, Isaac is the lamb. Remember the difference here.

Are you willing to obey God? Do you love God more than you love your son? Are you willing to sacrifice your son because of the word of God? You know, the holy, righteous, perfect God, your sinful son, that actually does deserve to die, like you do.

Whom will you choose? That's the choice that's being put right there in front of Abraham. It reminds me of some of the words of Jesus.

No one who wishes to come after me and he doesn't hate his own father, mother, sister, brother, could be my disciple. Who do you love most? Who do you love the most?

[ 24 : 01 ] Who do you love the most? In other words, do we disobey God for the sake of someone that we love?

Do you disobey God for the sake of someone that you love? Husbands, wives, when you see your spouse running around the house doing things that are sinful towards other people or towards your children, who do you love most at that moment?

Do you love God most at that moment or do you love your spouse most at that moment? Are you willing to confront her or him about their sin? Are you afraid that they'll get mad at you so you just leave it alone and let God be offended and let them continue in their sin?

Parents, what about your children? Knowing that they need to be disciplined, will you let them go in that because you're afraid that they might hate you later?

You're afraid that they might get their esteem hurt too much? Are you willing to let them continue in disobedience and rebellion while God goes offended?

[ 25 : 11 ] And lest we think that just applies to those of us that have children in the home, let me press this issue with those of you with grown children. Your grown children confess and profess to be Christians, yet they sin against God by breaking the Sabbath.

When will you not... God, could you please come? But when will you confront them? Do you not know that you are offending a holy God? Do we love those familial relationships so much so that we will allow the Sabbath of God and God Himself to be offended so that we don't offend our family?

Do you love God most? Students, when you go to school and your friends, they like to tell the jokes about the new kid or about the weird kid or they like to make fun of the teacher, you don't want everybody to look at you and start making fun of you.

You want to be accepted by them. My question to you, in that moment, who do you love most? Do you love the praise of your friends and the acceptance of your friends?

Or do you love God most? whom do you love? Do you not understand that this is the greatest commandment in the Bible?

[ 26 : 31 ] Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, and mind. The question just continues to boil.

Because you see, we begin to make all kinds of excuses for ourselves. We begin to say, you know, and as a pastor, you're afraid to confront people. I don't want to confront somebody. They might get mad and not come back.

We're afraid to, well, let's hold the relationship so we can eventually tell them about these things. Is he a holy God and a righteous God or is he not? The Lord was putting the screws to Abraham.

But you see, I think it tests one more thing. Because if you look at the way Abraham responds in this story, Isaac says, Father, where's the lamb?

And what is it that Abraham says? God himself will provide the lamb. You see, the last question I would ask you is this.

[ 27 : 48 ] Do you rely on God completely? The principle that's really being brought out with this question is this principle.

That God always gives what God always demands. Look what he's demanding of Abraham. He's demanding that he believe God over his son.

He's demanding that he give up his son in his love for love for God. He's asking for perfection from Abraham. He's asking for holiness from Abraham.

He's asking for righteousness from Abraham. That you would love God more than all. You would love God most. And yet, Abraham, like us, how does he choose God in that moment?

How does he take that knife and rear back? How does he do that? Because he already knows something else about God. The writer of the Hebrews tells us that he considered that God could raise the dead.

[ 29 : 01 ] Because he's putting himself in God's hands. He says, God himself will provide the lamb. There will be a sacrifice today, my son. And you and I, we're going to go home when it's over.

And God himself is going to give to us what it is that he's required of us today. God gives what he demands. what is it then?

In large detail or big picture, what is it that God demands? He demands nothing less than perfect righteousness.

He demands nothing less than absolute perfect holiness. righteousness. That from the moment of conception until the moment of death, that all of the law of God would be kept in my life and your life absolutely perfect without any shade of missing it, without any sphere of falling flat, without any sort of loophole to try to get through so we can get it.

He expects of you, he demands of you absolute perfect righteousness. holiness. You will never see heaven, you will never see God, you will never see the streets of gold if you do not have absolute perfect righteous holiness.

[ 30 : 32 ] Ever. And my question is do you rely on God? Or are you relying on, well you know when I was a kid I prayed this prayer.

Or you know what, I was baptized in this church, my daddy was a deacon, my daddy was a pastor, that was me, my daddy did this, or my family did this, or I joined the church, or I've read my Bible this many times, or I've done this, or I've, what is your answer?

You stand before a holy God and you can't get in without righteousness. What are you going to say to him? God gives what God demands.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, behind him was a ram caught in the thicket. You see, what God demands, God gives.

And just as Abraham that day took his miraculous only son up onto the mountain, the very mountain that the temple is going to be built on later. Catch that?

[ 31 : 42 ] Come on, you'll get it in a second. He takes him up on the very mountain that the temple of God will be built upon later. And he raises his hand to kill his son for the service of God. Just that same way, God the father loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son to be sacrificed for the good of all man so that he might ransom many with his own life and his own blood.

The active obedience, we call it, of Jesus Christ who came to this world, who lived from the moment of conception until the moment of his death, perfectly obeying every single aspect of God's law.

He did everything that God commanded, every detail, no sin in him whatsoever. And then, just like Isaac in passive obedience, he let himself be taken and nailed to the cross.

And he just sat there and was waiting for the knife to plunge. and he died. And in that moment, the wrath of God was satisfied for all eternity.

And to prove that God was satisfied, three days later, God raised his son up from the grave. Just like Abraham said, he knows that he's one who can raise from the dead.

[ 33 : 12 ] Where's your reliance? What are you trusting in? What are you leaning on? What do you rest in? That I've done this, that I've done this, that I've done this.

Your rest and your reliance must be on what God provides himself. And God provides his son, Jesus Christ. First. Will you turn away from yourself?

Will you turn away from what you're trusting in? And will you turn to Christ?

Jesus commands, repent and believe.

And for those of us who are living in grace, who are believers in Jesus Christ, don't forget, Abraham was put to the test.

[ 35 : 03 ] As a Christian. This wasn't to earn his salvation.

It was proof that God had already saved him. Because, you know, that's what testing does.

That's what the trials and the difficulties of life that we face, that's what they're for. You understand? May God give us grace.

And may he give you grace before it's too late. Let's pray. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that.

Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that.

[ 36 : 10 ] Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that. Well, let's take a look at that.