

An Exercised Faith

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[0 : 00] And we read from the beginning to the end of verse 19. And it came to pass, Genesis 22, from the beginning.

And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, or test Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and he saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son, and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and they went both of them together.

[1 : 32] And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told them of.

And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

And the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.

For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.

[2 : 47] And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jerah, as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

The angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore.

And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.

So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba, and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

Amen. And may God bless to us this reading of his holy word. We're going to sing again now in Psalm 105. Psalm 105. We're going to sing verses 6 to 9.

[4 : 12] Psalm 105, verses 6 to 9. O ye that are of Abraham's race, his servant well approved, and ye that Jacob's children are, whom he chose for his own, because he and he only is the mighty Lord our God, and his most righteous judgments are in all the earth abroad.

His covenant he remembered hath that it may ever stand, to thousand generations the word he did command. which covenant he firmly made with faithful Abraham, and unto Isaac by his oath he did renew the same.

Psalm 105, verses 6 to 9. O ye that are of Abraham's race. O ye that are of Abraham's race, his servant well approved, and ye that king of children are, and he that are of Abraham's race, his servant well approved, and he that king of children are, and him he chose for his own.

Because he and me only is the mighty Lord the Lord, and his holy Lord the Lord, and his holy Lord the Lord, His covenant he remembered hath that him may ever stand, to thousand generations the word he did command.

which covenant he remembered be made, with faithful Abraham, and unto Isaac by his oath he did renew the same.

[7 : 08] Let's turn again to Genesis 22, and read at the beginning.

Genesis 22, verses 1 and 2. And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt or test Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here I am.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.

This is one of the most extraordinary chapters in the Bible. And if we didn't have a knowledge, really, of the Bible, and what God the Father did with his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we would find this particular chapter almost shocking.

Because what God has asked Abraham to do is really quite an incredible thing. We today would say it's actually a shocking thing.

[8 : 30] But we know that the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, somebody has described the Old Testament as God's picture book. And there's a lot of truth in that, in the sense that when you look at the lives of a lot of the Old Testament saints, the Lord is teaching us pictures.

He's teaching us so many spiritual lessons from their lives. And so much of the New Testament we can follow much more clearly as we work our way through the Old Testament.

And of course, that is what this chapter is teaching us so much about. And it's teaching God was teaching Abraham. But he wasn't just teaching Abraham.

He was teaching future generations and teaching ourselves as well about this whole incident with Abraham and Isaac, of what God was actually going to do and has done with his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in verse 1 it tells us, very simply, and it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham or test Abraham.

[9 : 46] It's a word that would be properly translated because God won't tempt, but he tests us. He tests us all the time.

But God uses temptation as part of the regulation of our Christian growth. The word and prayer and temptation. We know that the tempter is the evil one.

And God allows Satan to tempt us. But God himself is not a tempter. So the word here is that God is testing. God came and he tested Abraham.

And it says, after these things. So we say to ourselves, after what things? Well, really, after everything that had already happened in Abraham's life. And in a sense, Abraham's life had been a series of tests.

Test after test after test. The test began when God, back in chapter 12, called Abraham to leave everything behind and to go.

[10 : 52] He had to separate himself from his culture, from whatever work he was doing, from whatever he was engaged in, from basically his family, but his immediate, very, very immediate family.

He was to leave it all and he was to go to a place that God was going to show him. And that is the most extraordinary faith. Right from the word go, when God began to deal with Abraham, we see the most remarkable faith.

Can you imagine what it would be like? You're there and you're preparing to flit. Can you put it into today's kind of scenery?

And there's the lorry, the removals lorry there. And you're putting all your stuff into it. And people come along and say, oh, you're moving. Yes. Where are you going? I don't know.

And that's what Abraham was having to say. Because people would say, where are you going, Abraham? I don't know. Why are you going? Because God has asked me to go.

[11 : 58] And God is going to show me where to go. And that is remarkable faith. Because it tells us later on, as it did in Hebrews, that Abraham went out not knowing where he was going.

He went off on his journey and he was depending upon God leading him every step of the way, along the way. And that is faith. And in a sense, that's what we're doing every day.

If you as a Christian, that's what you're doing. You're going out every day. You're stepping out in faith. Because you don't know what each day is going to bring. But you're trust. You're looking to the Lord.

Just as we said to the children. Because life is often full of obstacles and worries and trials. And we have to be focused upon the Lord every day.

We are on a journey. We are on a journey. Well, we know where we're going. And we know how we're going. We're going with the Lord. But we don't know, apart from what has been revealed to us, of the fullness of where we're going.

[13 : 03] But anyway, in Abraham's life, it was test after test after test. Because when he got, when he was on the journey, of course, then famine broke out in the land where he eventually reached.

And that was difficult. And sometimes Abraham had to fight. And it wasn't an easy journey. You would think of God as saying, well, this is where you go.

This is what I want you to do. This is where I want you to go. That everything will go just smooth and plain. But it doesn't always work like that.

In fact, often it doesn't work like that. And it's through these things that God is testing us. And God was testing Abraham all the time. And so we come now to what would be, we would say, the supreme test.

And it's here that Abraham's faith is absolutely astonishing. Because one of the things that God had done right at the very beginning was he had promised Abraham that he was going to become the father of a great nation.

[14 : 11] And at that time, Abraham had no son. And, of course, you know the story of how there was a long delay, years and years and years and years. And how Sarah tried to help Abraham taking Hagar.

But that was all wrong. That wasn't the way. And eventually the son of the promise has come. Here's that long-awaited fulfillment of that promise.

Here's Isaac. Abraham's heart was full. And Sarah's heart was full. And then God comes to Abraham one day and he says, Abraham, see your son.

The son that you love. I want you to take him as a sacrifice. Not just kill him, but as a burnt offering. That's why they were carrying the fire.

Now a burnt offering means there's nothing left. It wasn't just that Abraham had to kill his son on the altar on Moriah. He was going to have to burn him.

[15 : 15] And this is where Abraham's faith is absolutely astonishing. Because Abraham still believed that God was going to fulfill his promises through Isaac.

It's remarkable faith. And now, of course, if today, and this is where we have to be very clear. If somebody said to you, you know what God is saying to me?

God is saying to me that I have to sacrifice. If you're a parent and you're saying, you know, God is saying to me I have to sacrifice my son. You would say to yourself, that's rubbish. God would never ask you to do that.

What we've got to remember is that in the day that Abraham was living in, it was part of the culture. It wasn't like Abraham would have got an incredible shock that God had asked him to do that.

But God wasn't asking Abraham to do something that he didn't understand. Because the culture of that day was that children were sacrificed to the gods.

[16 : 20] Because you sacrificed various things, but people often sacrificed the ultimate sacrifice to appease the gods or an order that the gods would do for them.

And so child sacrifice, and history will show us that, was order of the day. In fact, God had to warn his people, you'll read about that in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, against child sacrifice.

Because the nations all round about were doing it. So what God is asking Abraham to do was not something that Abraham didn't know had happened.

It was something that he was familiar with. But what was astonishing was that God was asking him to do this, and particularly with the son of the promise.

And so this is Abraham's supreme test. Now as you and I know, tests are important in life. We've gone through life with tests. Whether it was in school, or in colleges, or apprenticeships, or whatever you're doing.

[17 : 26] You have to do tests in order to see how you're getting on. And it's through these tests you're able to discover how are you making progress.

Are you getting on? Are you getting somewhere? And it is so in the Christian life as well. You know this, we wouldn't develop and grow as Christians if we didn't have tests. Faith is a muscle.

Faith needs to be tried and tested and pushed and pulled. And temptation, as we say, is one of the ways in which we are strengthened.

So here we find in verse 2, the Lord comes asking Abraham to do what would be the hardest thing possible for him to do. And I can't imagine how Abraham felt that night.

How he would have been in bed that night sleeping. I don't know if he even told Sarah. It doesn't tell us that there was ever a conversation took place with Sarah.

[18 : 26] In fact, he didn't even tell Isaac. It is very obvious that he hadn't told Isaac. Even when they were going up the mountain. Because Isaac turns to his father on the way up and he said to his father, We have the fire, we've got the wood, we've got everything.

But where's the sacrifice? Where's the lamb? So you see, Abraham hadn't told this. Because the wonderful thing about Abraham's faith was this.

He believed God. He believed that God would raise Isaac up even from the ashes. He believed that God was still going to fulfill his promise through Isaac.

And Abraham saw through all that was happening here. He saw what God was going to do with his son Jesus.

How do we know that? Because the New Testament tells us that. Jesus tells us that. Jesus tells us that Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.

[19 : 32] Abraham believed he was able to see. God gave him the understanding to see. That what was happening here was a picture of what God was going to do with his own son.

The Lord Jesus Christ. So back as we said, back in chapter 12. God is asking Abraham to give up his past. To give up his life.

To give up everything that he knew. But here in this chapter. God is asking Abraham to give up his future. And that is a huge test.

Because Abraham's future was centered in Isaac his son. And that's why we say Abraham's faith is quite remarkable. Because Abraham believes God all the way through.

Are we like that? You know when our faith is tested. When the difficulties come into our lives. When the trials.

[20 : 32] The sorrows. The losses. The crosses. The bereavements. How do we react? Are we full of the why? Why me?

Lord this is not right. This is not fair. Lord do you know what you're doing? How often we've asked. I'm sure. At some point in your Christian life.

You have asked the Lord that very question. And afterwards you're sorry that you asked it. But sometimes you ask. Lord do you know what you're doing here? Yes of course the Lord knows what he's doing.

Lord have you forgotten me? No you have. The Lord hasn't forgotten you. Lord. Do you. What's the purpose in this? Now sometimes the Lord will never tell us.

He won't reveal to us. The actual purpose of what. What the particular trial or test is. But God has a purpose. And in all that he does. And so.

[21 : 30] God allows these tests. Into our lives. In order to. In order to strengthen our faith. In order to purify us. You know this. See when we get tested. We come to discover things.

About ourselves. That we never knew before. We see. Into our own hearts. We have self discovery moments. Through these testings. That we never saw before.

And we. We sometimes like. Abraham himself says. I. I. I. I repent in dust and ashes. And that's the way we sometimes feel. But not only.

In these testings. Do we discover more about ourselves. But we also discover more about God. We come to see him. Clearer. We get. We get. A greater glimpse.

A greater understanding. And so. We find that. Abraham is now. Taking his son. And.

[22 : 30] The. And as we know. This. We talk about. Abraham and Isaac. Being a type. And a type. Really is. Is. Where it is a kind of.

A symbolic representation. Of something. And of course. We know that the Abraham. Isaac. Is a representation. A symbolic representation. Of what God the father.

Has done. With God the son. So we find out there. On the third day. We find that. The. The. The. The. That. Abraham. That. Abraham and Isaac.

Eventually go on their journey. Because that's. What we find. And Abraham and Isaac. Rose up early in the morning. And saddled his ass. And took two of his young men.

With him. And then in verse four. Then on the third day. Abraham lifted up his eyes. And he saw the place afar off. That would have been. A difficult journey. And.

[23 : 26] All the time. In Abraham's heart. Would be what he had to do. In one sense. It would be almost easier. If he had to. God said. Take your son right now. And sacrifice him.

He wouldn't have time to think. It'd process it all the way through. But he's got quite a bit of time. And in many ways. It's harder. And harder. And harder. To do. But this is sacrifice.

Remember. Sacrifice. Costs. And you know. The Lord. Asks us. To live. As sacrificially. Before him. Present your bodies.

A living sacrifice. In other words. It costs. When we. When we talk about. Giving sacrificially. If somebody is giving. Sacrificially. It means that they're giving.

In such a way. That it is actually. Costing them to give. They're giving more. Almost than they can afford. To give. That would be. Sacrificial giving. But God is asking it. That our lives.

[24 : 24] Be lived like that. That you. To offer. Ourselves. A living sacrifice. So that every day. We are. Giving ourselves. To the Lord.

And that means. It means. Putting to death. So much. Of what the sin. Within our own lives. It's fighting. Against all the natural. Instincts.

That are part and partial. Of our. Human nature. You know. All the corruption. That is there. Where we sin. So easily. So readily. And where we have to stop.

And where we have to fight. Against these things. It costs. Not for one moment. Do we think. That it's a breeze. Walking through the Christian life. That everything is easy.

That every day. We just sail through it. No we don't. We struggle. We groan. We wrestle. We fight.

[25 : 20] It's all these things. That are involved. In the Christian. In the Christian faith. And so we find. That. The time now has come. Where. They're going to come.

To the. To the. To the mountain. And. We find that. Abraham. Separates. Abraham and Isaac. They separated themselves. From the young men.

And Abraham. Puts the wood. On Isaac's back. He sees. Isaac is carrying. Carrying the wood. And. You know. All of this. That's. Verse six.

Abraham took the wood. Of the burnt offering. And laid it upon Isaac's son. And he took the fire. In his hand. And a knife. And they both. Went to them together. You can't read this.

Without thinking. Of the Lord Jesus. Because the father. Allowed. That the wood. Of the sacrifice. Be placed. On his son. As well. Because we remember.

[26 : 14] Jesus. Carrying the cross. What he was to be. What he was. The sacrifice. That he was to make. For our sin. It was upon. Upon wood.

And he carried it up. The hill. And so we find. The same. With Isaac. Here. He. Is in turn. He's carrying. This up. And it's interesting.

That Abraham and Isaac. Separate themselves. From the others. Because the others. Aren't going to be. Witnessed to this. It's only. Abraham and Isaac. Alone.

And you know. That's again. A picture. Of what happened. On Calvary. Because at one level. The death of Jesus. Was very public. Everybody could see it. Everybody gathered there.

Could see Jesus. On the cross. But there was. A private. Thing. Happening. Between the father. And the son. On that cross. That nobody else. Was party to.

[27 : 09] Nobody else. Could see. And that was. Where. In the darkness. Of the hour. In that period. Where there was. A darkness. And God. Was the father.

Was pouring. Upon his son. The punishment. For our sin. That's where Jesus. Cries out. My God.

My God. Why. Has thou forsaken me? Nobody could see. What was taking place. They could see. The outward. But they couldn't see.

Within. It was like. In the day of atonement. When the high priest. Went into the holy of holies. Nobody knew. Nobody could see. When he went in there. With the blood. They just waited. Till he came back out.

Well in a sense. That's what was happening. On Calvary. And nobody was seeing. What was going to happen here. Anyway. They reached the top. And Isaac asks. About the sacrifice.

[28 : 03] And Abraham says. God will provide himself. A lamb for the sacrifice. And how true. Only God can provide. For the sacrifice.

For our sins. And we know. That the provision that he made. Was his own son. His only. Begotten son. This is my beloved son.

And yet God gave him up. For us all. Isn't that amazing? And only somebody. Who was. Had the worth. And the merit. And the value. Could satisfy divine justice.

The wonderful thing. About Jesus Christ. Is. That. In order for God. To deal with sin. And in order for. Our sins. To be dealt with.

It had to be a human. To be a representative. And that's why. God the son. Took our nature. To stand in our place.

[29 : 01] To die for us. But it is only someone. Who is God. Who has sufficient merit. That could satisfy. Divine justice. And so this is.

Who Jesus Christ is. The God. The God man. We cannot. Our own sin. Disqualifies us. For ever. Trying to. Take the sin.

Of anybody else. And so we find there. That. They come to the top. And we. We find there. Abram. Now building the altar. And I can't imagine.

At this point. What's going through. Abram's heart. From a human point. And yet. It's what God the father. Had to do with his son. And then it tells us. That. Abram.

Bound. Isaac. His son. And laid him. On the top of the wood. Now I often wonder. About that. Of how that. Took place. Because Isaac. Wouldn't be like a wee boy. Of three or four.

[29 : 56] He would probably be a. Possibly a young teenager. There's no doubt. Abram was a strong man. We read that. About his fighting. And his abilities. But.

I think. There must have been. A willingness. On Isaac's part. As well. Because. We know that. Anyway. Abraham. Bound him. But we know that.

When the supreme sacrifice. Came. There was total willingness. In the part of the son. Where the Lord Jesus said. To do thy will. I take delight.

The prospect. Of what lay before Jesus. Was so great. That. He sweated. Remembers. It were drops of blood. He cried out. And he said. If it's possible. Let this cup. Pass from me.

Nevertheless. Not my will. But thine be done. So Abraham. Puts Isaac on the altar. And then comes this moment. And he takes a knife. And he's ready to plunge the knife.

[30 : 54] Into his son. And then the voice comes from heaven. With great urgency. Abraham. Abraham. Don't. Do it. Don't. Kill.

The child. Do not lay your hand on him. You know. It's often pointed out. You've heard it often enough before.

But we need to think over and over. And over again. When Jesus was led up that hill Calvary. And he was laid up on the cross. And the knife came to him.

There was no voice from heaven. Saying stop. And remember that God loved his son. God spoke from heaven before. Saying this is my beloved son.

But in this occasion. Heaven remains silent. And the knife. Of God's wrath. Is plunged into his son.

[31 : 54] As he bears our sin. And then from a human point of view. As he dies. But Abraham. God stopped Abraham.

Remember it tells us how. Abraham saw this ram caught in the thicket. And he sacrificed the ram in place. But you know. As we come to conclude here.

What I love about this whole thing. And how we see the whole of scripture. Linking up and tying up together. As we see Abraham's faith is so astonishing here.

That. We find that. In verse 14. You see there. It tells us that. And Abraham called the name of the place. Jehovah Jireh. As it is said to this day.

In the mount of the Lord. It shall be seen. In the mount of the Lord. It shall be seen. It certainly was seen. Because on this very place.

[32 : 52] This is Moriah. Let's remember. And when we come to 2nd Chronicles. We find in chapter 3. That Solomon. That Solomon. Began to build the house of the Lord.

In Jerusalem. Where? On Mount Moriah. The place where. Abraham. All these years before. Was called upon to offer.

His son. And there are a number of hills. All around there on Mount Moriah. And one of these hills. Is Golgotha Calvary. The very place.

Where Jesus. Was put to death. You see the amazing way. Of how scripture ties in. That all these. Centuries later.

After Abraham. Had gone up this hill. With his son Isaac. To offer him as a sacrifice. To show us. What God the Father. Was going to do. All these centuries later.

[33 : 54] And why has God. In all of this. He's done it for us. For you. For me. That's why God has done it. Everything he has done. He's done it for us.

That's why he's given us. His word. It's there. This is a word. That makes us wise. To salvation. This is a word. That shows us. What God has done. We've grown up with it.

And so often. We take it for granted. This is the most precious. Wonderful thing. That we have. Because the God of heaven and earth. Has revealed to us.

Who he is. His purposes for us. What he has done for us. What he is yet doing for us. What he has prepared for us. It's all here.

So let us make sure. That this word. Is central to our lives. And remember. That this word. Is where we see Jesus.

[34 : 51] You know. A lot of people say. I can't see Jesus properly. You know. There's a problem. A lot of people have. They say. You know. I.

Where can I see Jesus properly. Well remember. Who is Jesus. Jesus is the word. The word. Was made flesh. And dwelt among us.

And so we see Jesus. When we see the word. So it is important that. We fill our minds with this truth. And that is why.

You know. When you read the word of God. When you make the word of God. Your daily. Your daily diet. That is why. As a Christian. Your heart is stirred up.

Because. This is Jesus. Interacting with you. He comes. Into you. He becomes part of you. And that is why Christians.

[35 : 47] When they stop reading God's word. Or they. They leave it aside. They stop enjoying things. Their Christian growth slows down. It is inevitable.

Because we have to be. With Jesus. Let us pray. Lord our God. We give thanks for your word. We pray that. In all our poor efforts. And attempts.

That you will. Indeed take the glory. That you will be seen. That it is all about you. Help us Lord. To look to you. To trust in you.

To believe in you. To give thanks for you. Take us to our home safely. We pray and do us good. Cleansing us from our every sin. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 73. The 73rd Psalm. And we're going to sing.

[36 : 48] Oh no sorry. Psalm 68. I should say. Psalm 68.

Verses 18 to 20. Thou hast O Lord most glorious ascended up on high. And in triumph victorious led captive captivity.

Thou hast received gifts for men for such as did rebel. Yea even for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell. Blessed be the Lord who is to us of our salvation God.

Who daily with his benefits as plenteously doth load. He of salvation is the God who is our God most strong. And unto God the Lord from death the issues to belong.

Psalm 68 verses 18 to 20. Thou hast O Lord most glorious. Thou hast O Lord most glorious.

[37 : 54] Ascended upon high. And in triumph victorious.

And in triumph victorious. And in triumph victorious. Captive captivity. Thou hast received in gifts for men for such as did rebel.

Gave him for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell.

Blessed be the Lord who is to us of our salvation God.

Who daily with his benefits as plenteously doth load.

[39 : 17] He of salvation is the God who is our God most strong.

And unto God the Lord from death he issues to belong.

Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.