



DATE: October 19, 2008

TEXT: Genesis 22: 1,2,6-14

TITLE: "A Test of Faith"

Last Sunday we saw the poor choices of Abraham and Sarah. We saw their choices of disobedience that led to terrible consequences. We saw their lack of trust in the Word of God. We saw their failure to "wait on the Lord." We saw their moral compromise. Finally last week, we saw the terrible consequences of these failures: Terrible consequences for Abraham, for Sarah, for Hagar, for Ishmael, for Isaac, and for you and for me as we continue the hostility between Islam and Judaism. That was last week. This morning we are going to see just the opposite. This morning we are moving forward in time by about 15 to 20 years and we are going to see the wonderful obedience of Abraham. As a matter of fact, we are going to see obedience that I am sure I am not capable of. I will share four lessons from our text in Genesis 22. This is considered to be the absolute high point on the story of Abraham.

**Lesson # 1** God desires of his children absolute surrender and faith. *Genesis 22:1-2*

**Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to**

**the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."**

This is an unbelievable request from God. If I received this request, I must admit, I would not consider obeying it. How could Abraham act in obedience? I believe this answer is this....

Abraham knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he would come down from Mt. Moriah with Isaac. Abraham had the absolute promise of God that Isaac would be the father of a great nation.

He had seen the miraculous conception and birth of Isaac. He had personally witnessed the mercy of God in his conversations regarding Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham knew his Lord.

Abraham rested on God's Word to him.

We know this is true by the way, because it is told to us in the book of Hebrews.

*Heb 11:17ff* states....

**17By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."19Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death**

The story we read in Genesis 22 is the ultimate example of trust in the Word of God.....

trust in the Lord Almighty.....trust in promises of God.

The lesson is this: God desires his children to grow in their trust as we walk closer and

closer to Him. Notice the wonderful words of Abraham when God speaks to him. Abraham says “**Here I am.**” These words are repeated by Abraham again and again in our text. Abraham says “Here I am” in verse 1 in verse 7 and in verse 11. Again and again Abraham offers himself to his Lord.

That is the challenge of our text this morning. Are we willing to share this same statement in our discussions with the Lord? “Here I am Lord” “My name is Doug Runyan... Here I am Lord, your servant, your child, ready to obey.” Is that the prayer you are willing to offer to the Lord? Hebrews 11 is the great chapter of faith. Abraham is given as an example of faith and obedience.... but the chapter ends with these words from *Hebrews 12:1,2*

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,**

In Genesis 22 we have the ultimate example of a person who fixed his eyes on God. We need to follow the example of father Abraham. We need to fix our eyes of Jesus. We need to absolutely trust His Word. We need to absolutely trust His promises made to you and to me.

**Lesson # 2** God directs his children in a path of growth. *Genesis 22:1*

**Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.**

*Matthew 4:1* **1Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil**

*James 1:2* **2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

The lesson from all these texts and many, many others in scripture is this... the Lord leads his children into trials. Trials are God's way of guiding our lives and teaching us to grow in our faith. We do the same thing with our children.

I remember when Adam was just short of his 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. We set up a Christmas tree.

Now Adam was being held by Kim or by me or by Erin as we decorated the tree. We put all the breakable ornaments up high... but we had to teach Adam... for his own safety to not touch the tree. When the tree was done we told Adam to not touch the tree. Then we put him down and left the room... but we spied on him from the other room. And sure enough... we saw Adam look around... see that he was alone in the room... and immediately toddled over to the tree and grabbed an ornament. We went into the room and smacked his hand and said... "no... no do not

touch the tree.” And of course, Adam being the perfect toddler never tries to touch the tree again. No True... the lesson had to be taught many, many times.

We are like toddlers. Again and again the Lord guides us into Christian maturity.

Understand this... the Lord never tempts us with sin....*James 1:13 states...*

**When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**

Temptations are results of our sinful nature and the work of the Devil in our lives. They too can be used by the Lord to guide and teach us.... but they are initiated by ourselves. Trials are usually our reactions to life's events.

- How do we handle the death of a loved one? Is it in way of trust in the Lord or is it in a way of non-trust?
- How do we handle the wrong decisions of our children? Is it in a way of trust in the Lord or is it in the way of non-trust?
- How do we handle the disappointments in life... in a way of trust or in a way of non-trust?
- How do we handle our illness... in a way of trust or in a way of non-trust?

I could go on and on and on. Each and every person face many, many trails in our lives.

Do we face these trials as mature children of God or do we get angry or bitter and break relationships? Abraham faced a trial... and trusted in the Lord.

**Lesson # 3** God gives provision to His children. Try to think of this story from the perspective of Isaac. Abraham goes to his son and says “Isaac... you and I are going to make an offering to the Lord on Mt. Moriah... we are leaving early tomorrow morning.” Next morning comes.... Abraham leads his son to a pile of wood... “Isaac, you carry the wood.” “How far dad?” “It should not take more than three days... just carry the wood.” I can almost hear Isaac a couple of days later “are we almost there yet?” Abraham “be quiet and carry the wood.” The next day “are we almost there yet.” “Yeah, almost... carry the wood.” But then we read this dialogue... and this is actually scriptural... (*Genesis 22:6-8*)

**6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.**

**"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together**

Here is the magnificent trust of Abraham.... **“God will provide.”** These are the words of trust for each of us. Trust in the provision of God.

What is the greatest provision the Lord can give to us? Is it material property? No. That is not promised. Is it the answer to all our prayers according to our own wills? No. That also is

not promised in scripture. Is it healing from all our ills. No that is certainly not promised? Is it freedom from death? We know that is not promised? What can we trust in? What is the promise of God? Peace. Let me say that again. Peace. God promises peace to His children.

Jesus makes this promise *John 14:26*

**But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**

*In John 16 :33 Jesus says...*

**33"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."**

I have discovered the peace of God. My wife and I have gone through a number of trials the past few years. We have experienced the death of loved ones. We have experienced the disappointments of our children. We have experienced a number of trials... and we have experienced the peace of God. That is the greatest gift our Lord can give His children. Grow in faith and discover the peace of God.

**Finally Lesson # 4** Notice that our text is a precursor to the sacrifice of Christ. Once again hear this command of God to Abraham. *Genesis 22:2*

**Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah**

And then also hear the conclusion of our story in *Genesis 22:11-13*

**Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.**

**12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."**

**13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram [a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son**

I do not believe anyone dropped a knife as fast as Abraham dropped the knife. I do not believe anyone untied a knot as fast as Abraham untied the knots binding his son. The son of Abraham was spared from the knife... spared from the sacrifice.

But here is the amazing truth. Many scholars believe that in the region of Moriah, later a great city was built.. The city came to be called Jerusalem. And many scholars believe the mountain on which Abraham had built the alter to sacrifice his son was given a new name.. The name was Golgotha. The same mountain where Isaac was spared the knife was where the knife was thrust into our Lord Jesus. The son of Abraham was spared... the son of God was sacrificed.

After Isaac was spared God renewed his covenant promise to Abraham... he would be the father of a great nation. After Jesus was put to death... a new covenant was established. A covenant

sealed by His blood. A covenant summed up in *John 1:12*...

**Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—**

This is God's covenant with you and me. Christ was sacrificed that we might have life.

The Father gave the world his Son. We are His children.

AMEN