

Over the last few weeks we've seen that faith is believing, and if you believe you take action. Abel believed he needed the mercy of God to be right with God and so he offered a blood sacrifice. Enoch believed, and so he walked with God. Noah also walked with God, and when told to build an ark, he didn't question God. He went to work. Today we are going to see that same faith resulting in obedience without question applied to Abraham. We've already seen that he was justified by faith when he believed that God would keep his promise to make him a great nation and he obediently departed from Ur. Now we will see another test that God gave Abraham that demonstrated his trust in God's promises demonstrated by obedience.

Turn to Genesis 22 and follow along as I go through the account of this test. Isaac had been born to ninety-one-year-old Sarah. When Isaac's half-brother mocked him, Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. We don't know how old Isaac is in chapter 22, but many commentators suggest he was at least of the age of puberty or older, for he was strong enough to carry the wood up the mountain of sacrifice (Genesis 22:6). That would make Abraham one hundred and twelve-years of age or older. Verse one tells us this was a test that God was giving to Abraham. Verse twelve tells us the test was to see if he feared God.

There is a natural aversion to the phrase "fear of God." I often hear people try to explain it simply as reverence. It is that and more. It is a recognition that God is God and we are not. He is to be obeyed. Biblical fear of God does not mean we think any less of His love. On the contrary, a child will fear disobeying a loving parent because there are disciplinary consequences. An apathetic parent won't bother with discipline. We are suffering the consequences of that in our society today. Part of the problem is we think so highly of ourselves that we don't want to consider we need to be disciplined. A third of our culture doesn't even believe in the most obvious of all facts: we are sinful beings who need the discipline of God to direct us (Hebrews 12:5-6).

God told Abraham, in verse 2, to take his only son whom he loved and sacrifice him on a mountain in Moriah. Remember, his first son through Hagar, Ishmael, had already been sent away. Abraham's only son and heir is now Isaac. All his hope in the promises is placed in this boy. Maybe too much of his hope and love were placed in him. Sometimes a blessing from God becomes our hope and joy, so much so that it surpasses that of our hope in and love for the Giver of the blessing. But Abraham obeyed immediately. Early in the morning, he saddled up his donkey, prepared the wood, gathered his men and the boy and headed for Moriah, a three-day journey.

In verse five we see the great faith of Abraham. Arriving at the mountain, Abraham told his men that they should wait there while he and the boy went to worship, and that they would return. He didn't say, "I will return." He said, *"I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."* Genesis 22:5b How could he say that if he knew he was about to sacrifice him? He believed the promise of God that declared through Isaac the seed of Abraham would be called (Genesis 21:12). As yet, Isaac had

Commented [PW1]: Genesis 22:6 (ESV)

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.

Commented [PW2]: Genesis 22:1 (ESV)

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Commented [PW3]: Genesis 22:12 (ESV)

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."

Commented [PW4]: Hebrews 12:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Commented [PW5]: Genesis 22:2 (ESV)

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."

Commented [PW6]: Genesis 22:5 (ESV)

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."

Commented [PW7]: Genesis 21:12 (ESV)

¹² But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

not fathered any children. Abraham reasoned that God could not lie, so God would have to raise Isaac from the dead. That is how convinced Abraham was of the promises of God. He was willing to believe and obey, surrendering that which was dearest to him. His faith in God's Word was absolute. No one had seen resurrection, but if God said that in Isaac his seed would be named, then that must be what will happen.

On the way up the mountain Isaac asked where the sacrifice was. ⁸ *Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."* Genesis 22:8a And in time, the seed that was to come through Isaac did come (the word "seed" being singular masculine word in Hebrew (Galatians 3:16)). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, Jesus (John 1:29). But first, Abraham obeyed. He bound Isaac and placed him on the wood. Verse ten tells us he raised the knife, but then the angel of the LORD intervened and stopped Abraham. The angel of the LORD appears to be the pre-incarnate Jesus, for in verse twelve, 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."* Genesis 22:12

Abraham passed the test. He put God first, and believed the Word of God. His faith was real, for it resulted in action, assurance of what he hoped for and conviction in what he could not see. James uses this account from Genesis 22 to show that faith results in works. ²⁰ *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?* ²¹ *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* ²² *You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;* ²³ *and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God.* ²⁴ *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.* James 2:20-24

Previously, we saw that Abraham was the father of faith because he believed the original promise of God to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:2-3). James is saying he is counted as righteous because he passed this test of faith by offering up Isaac. Really, there is no difference, for the promise to become a great nation was through Isaac. James is saying that initial faith was completed by his actions which confirmed Abraham's faith in the promise was real.

We can see this repeated theme that teaches that faith results in action. In our passage in Hebrews we read ¹⁷ *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."* Hebrews 11:17-18 Don't think that God only tests the great saints in Scripture. We all receive our opportunities to demonstrate our faith is real or that we are just fooling ourselves.

We have great promises as well. Let me remind you of a few. *The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world* (1 John 4:4). *I will never leave or forsake you* (Hebrews 13:5). And one I cling to that you often hear from me, *He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it* (Philippians 1:6). There are hundreds more in Scripture, great and precious promises. That expression reminds me of another promise that uses that phrase, ³ *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life*

Commented [PW8]: Galatians 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Commented [PW9]: John 1:29 (NIV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Commented [PW10]: Genesis 22:10-11 (ESV)

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."

Commented [PW11]: Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV)

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Commented [PW12]: 1 John 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Commented [PW13]: Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Commented [PW14]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1:3-4 If we will lay hold of these promises by faith, we too can become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world because of sinful desires. That's a promise!

Abraham had such faith that he believed God could raise Isaac from the dead. ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. Hebrews 11:19 Abraham expressed that faith to his servants when he said the he and the boy would return. Do we live our lives believing in the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)? You see, God has promised to raise us up as well. Our spirits will go to God when we pass from this earth (Philippians 1:23), but God has promised to raise up believers and transform our bodies into immortal bodies that are like His resurrected body (Philippians 3:21). If we believe that, we will be investing our lives in eternity by the way we live each day. Our menial daily tasks will be done for the glory of God. Our conversations will be looking for that opportunity to sow life changing words. Our every day will be imbued with the eternal perspective and transformed into lives of faith. We'll see God at work at nearly every turn. We'll be partakers of the divine nature like Abraham was, probably with flaws like Abraham had, but with a glorious outcome as well.

One thing we should notice about the testimonies of Abraham and Sarah, though the account is clear about their faults, the final account in this chapter only retains their faith. Now that should put a smile on your faces and be a great encouragement. The same is true of the last word on the kings of Israel. Either they were said to be like their father David or they weren't like him (2 Chronicles 17:3; 2 Kings 16:2). The enemy of our soul wants us to wallow in our failures. God wants us to see the greatness of His grace and forgiveness (Romans 8:1). Jesus' work on the cross paid our sin debt, and our sins are remembered no more. There won't be any discussion of our failures in heaven, only of the faith that resulted in actions that gave glory to God. When the account of your life is read in heaven, it will only tell of how you put God first. The rest will be forgotten, wiped away along with our tears (Psalm 103:12).

²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. Hebrews 11:20 You may recall the account in Genesis 27 of Isaac pronouncing the blessing over his sons. Jacob deceived his blind father, Isaac, into thinking he was blessing Esau. However, the point being made here is that Isaac spoke in faith, believing the promises of God would be fulfilled. Though he had the wrong son in mind, God used Jacob's cunning to see that the right one was blessed. Again, we aren't reminded of Isaac's wrong choice, but of his faith to proclaim the promises over his sons. He pronounced the blessing God gave to Abraham, the blessing to those who bless him and the curse to those who curse him (Genesis 27:29). That means he believed the promises of God just as his father did, and he believed that it was going down a single family line to a conclusion, the seed that would bless the world, the Messiah.

Commented [PW15]: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Commented [PW16]: Philippians 1:23 (ESV)

²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Commented [PW17]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Commented [PW18]: 2 Kings 16:2 (ESV)

² Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done,

Commented [PW19]: 2 Kings 16:2 (ESV)

² Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done,

Commented [PW20]: Romans 8:1 (ESV)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Commented [PW21]: Psalm 103:12 (ESV)

¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Commented [PW22]: Genesis 27:29 (NIV)

²⁹ May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. Hebrews 11:21 Jacob, the third patriarch, went into Egypt to survive the famine, God having sent Joseph before him and making Joseph second in command of all Egypt. Like his father, he lived to an old age and called in Joseph's sons to bless them before he died. He knew by faith that the eldest was not the son God favored and so placed his right hand on the younger son's head. While he was not passing on the promises to Abraham to reign forever and bless the world, the Messianic promises, for those would run through the line of Judah (Genesis 49:8-12), he was speaking by faith what God had directed him to declare, the portion of the promise to make of them a great multitude (Genesis 48:16). He spoke of their future inheritance in the land God had promised his grandfather, Abraham and repeated to him (Genesis 48:3-6).

These last two testimonies of faith tell those of us who are fathers that we should by faith pass on the blessings God has promised to us. Before we die we should follow the example of these men of faith and declare what God has shown us. I wonder if there is even one person here who has received a blessing like that. Imagine the impact it would have over your life. I encourage you to follow their examples. Write out a blessing for each of your children and grandchildren. Pray it over them before you leave this temporal plane. I haven't done this yet, but I certainly plan to do so. I have given my grandchildren my devotional and after praying wrote a note to each of them in it.

There is a DVD from Creation Research Ministries that shows how college students brought up in the church, at least for part of their youth, who were not taught the challenges to evolution being our origin, fall away from church during their college years. Those raised in the church who were shown the challenges to and problems with Darwinian evolution remained in the church. Sixty to eighty percent of church attending youth quit attending church after a short time in college. We have an obligation to pass on our faith and give them answers to the challenges they will face. Part of that is passing on a blessing over their lives before we leave this earth. It declares our faith that God will answer our prayers over their lives.

²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. Hebrews 11:22 The entire story of Joseph is one of amazing faith. He believed the dreams God gave him of ruling over his family. Being one of the youngest sons, that was quite a strange dream, but he knew it was from God and believed (Genesis 37:5-7). He kept his faith even after being sold into slavery, falsely accused and thrown into jail (Genesis 39:19-20), and the promises of the man he helped forgotten for years (Genesis 40:23). But what the author of Hebrews brings out is his conviction in the promises to his forefathers.

Have you ever considered the possibility of affecting the lives of your great-grandchildren by passing on to them the promises of God to you? What if you wrote down what God puts on your heart for them? Imagine affecting the lives of three generations for the Kingdom of God! Joseph's testimony went on much longer, in fact,

Commented [PW23]: Genesis 49:8-12 (NIV)

⁸ "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.

⁹ You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness-- who dares to rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

¹¹ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.

¹² His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

Commented [PW24]: Genesis 48:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ the Angel who has delivered me from all harm --may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth."

Commented [PW25]: Genesis 48:3-6 (NIV)

³ Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me

⁴ and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.'

⁵ "Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

⁶ Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.

Commented [PW26]: Genesis 37:5-7 (ESV)

⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more.

⁶ He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed:

⁷ Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf."

Commented [PW27]: Genesis 39:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled.

²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

Commented [PW28]: Genesis 40:23 (ESV)

²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

we are reading about it today. After 400 years, when Moses led the children of Israel/Jacob out of Egypt, they carried his bones with them (Exodus 13:19).

An archeologist by the name of Rohl believes he has discovered in Goshen Joseph's palace and mausoleum where his bones were kept until the Exodus. I quote from an essay by Thomas McCall. "Rohl and his colleagues believe the palace is that of Joseph, perhaps his retirement villa after many years of service to Pharaoh. It has two apartments in front, suggesting the living quarters of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. In the rear are the more spacious living quarters of the prime occupants, perhaps Joseph and his Egyptian wife. Adjacent to the ruins of the palace, there is an elegant garden area, and in the garden was an unusual tomb. The tomb was in the shape of a small pyramid, but it is clear that the vault was broken into and the remains removed. However, the damage to the tomb was not like that done by the all too common grave robbers of Egypt. It appears to be a careful and methodical removal of bricks from the tomb, as one would expect where the bones of Joseph were carefully removed from his long-used grave by Moses. Could it be that we have here the very tomb of the great patriarch Joseph? The evidence certainly takes it out of the realm of mythology, even for the hardened scientist, and into the realm of accurate history."

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, all men of faith who acted according to their faith, declaring their confidence in the Word of God, and who passed on their faith to future generations. Will you commit today to be such a person? It's not important that your descendants remember your occupation or worldly successes or failures, but it is vitally important that you pass on to them your blessing and your faith. It is of eternal importance that our faith takes action! And if you do not have children, what about your nieces and nephews. If you don't have nieces or nephews, what of the other children in your life. And if there are none, you can certainly pray for those of us who do, for the children in our church. Get to know them. Show them the love of Jesus and that you care about them. Use tax dollars to support Christian education. Support the Christian education fund. God will show you a way to demonstrate your faith by encouraging future generations to follow the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Questions

- 1 What was the purpose of God's test?
- 2 What was Abraham's reasoning?
- 3 What were Abraham's expressions of faith?
- 4 What are some promises to us?
- 5 What changes when we believe in resurrection?
- 6 What is our testimony in heaven?
- 7 What was the expression of Isaac and Jacob's faith?
- 8 What was the expression of Joseph's faith?
- 9 How can we follow their example?

- 10 What is the main message of this sermon?

Commented [PW29]: Exodus 13:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here."

Commented [PW30]: Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)

⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.