

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

The Value of Tested Faith

Hebrews 11:17-22

March 10th, 2019

Main Point

Like Abraham, there will be times when our faith is put to the test. These moments are eternally valuable because they not only prove the genuineness of our faith, they prove the faithfulness of our God.

Getting Started

Read Genesis 22:1-19 below, the Bible story about Abraham sacrificing his son.

'After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 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, 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 I am, 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 a burnt offering, my son." So, they went both of them together. 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. 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 I am." 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 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." And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." So, Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.'

Observation

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 11:17-22.

How did God test Abraham? Why did Abraham take Isaac with him to the altar?

What did God want from Abraham? Choose one.

- *A sacrifice*
- *Absolute obedience*
- *To be loved above all else*
- *Faithfulness*
- *Other*

What do you think Isaac learned from this experience?

- *To be committed to God like his father*
- *That God will provide*
- *That Abraham's relationship with God came first*
- *Other*

How does the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac remind you of the Gospel?

How did Abraham respond to God's instructions to offer up Isaac? What did Abraham reason about God's sovereignty over death?

How did Isaac and Jacob's blessings reveal a future orientation to faith? What did the author of Hebrews mean that it was 'by faith' that Isaac and Jacob offered their blessings?

Application

Consider the maturity of faith it took for Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, on the altar. How did Abraham's faith grow to the point of actually acting on God's command to kill his one and only son? Faith grows as we daily press into God's word and obey him when he guides us. Faith grows stronger as we hear God's Word, act on it and watch him come through for us again and again. Determine to read God's Word daily if you are not already doing so. Determine to obey him in what he shows you even before he shows you what to do. Record his faithfulness by journaling and remembering how he came through for you. Then you will see your faith grow to the point of following God when trials hit hard.

Spend some time in silence thinking about God's faithfulness to you. Recall times when he has come through for you when you did not know where to turn. Ask him to show you what it will mean for you to daily live in faithful obedience. Faith grows over time as we trust and obey in the seemingly small moments.

Prayer

Your word teaches that the righteous will live by faith (Romans 1:17). Lord Jesus, please help me walk by faith through prayer each day. May you find me ever pressing into your word and longing to do what it says. Lord Jesus, I surrender to you and look to you to guide me. Strengthen my faith through the trials of life so I experience more of your presence and blessings.

Commentary

11:17 The Greek for tested appears also in Genesis 22:1-19. The word occurs elsewhere in Hebrews, though with a focus on temptation to sin. See James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7. Although Abraham also had Ishmael and other children, this word designates Isaac as Abraham's unique son, the son who is 'one of a kind'. The word for only son in the Greek is monogeneses. This is his only heir and the only recipient of covenant promises. Abraham expressed confidence that he would return with Isaac. Hebrews makes a figurative analogy between resurrection and Isaac being saved from the sacrificial knife. Some interpreters perceive here an Isaac-Christ typology such as was common in the post-apostolic church fathers. As Isaac, Abraham's only son was offered in sacrifice and raised so Jesus, God's only Son, is sacrificed and raised. Others doubt that such typology is intended here.

11:20 Isaac. These predictive future blessings demonstrate Isaac's hope for the future.

11:21 Jacob. Like Isaac, Jacob's future hope is evident in his blessing of his sons (Gen. 49:1-27) and especially in his blessing of the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh, Gen. 48:8-22).

11:22 Joseph. Joseph's future hope is his confidence that God will redeem his people through the exodus and lead them to the Promised Land, thus allowing Joseph's own bones to be moved to that land.

Adapted from www.smallgroup.com and Serendipity Bible for Groups, fourth edition