

Testing Faith

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[0 : 00] Well, by keeping your finger in Genesis chapter 22, if we could turn this morning to Hebrews chapter 11, Hebrews chapter 11, and we're continuing our study of this chapter of faith.

Hebrews chapter 11, page 1211, if you're using the Pew Bible. And with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, I'd like us to consider verses 17 to 19.

Hebrews chapter 11, and verse 17. But it says, 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, of whom it was said, through Isaac, your offspring shall be named.

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By faith Abraham, when he was tested.

When it comes to tests, no one likes to be tested. None of us like to be tested, because a test, well, it puts us under the spotlight.

[1 : 26] A test, it always scrutinizes our performance. A test always examines our knowledge. And, well, that inevitably, it adds a lot of pressure.

Because the purpose of a test is to see where we are at, and if there needs to be improvement. And we go through life being tested. There's lots of tests, whether it's school tests.

I'm sure we all went through them in school. Maybe university tests. Maybe some of you have had an IQ test. A driving test. Eye tests. Hearing tests. Fitness tests.

We're constantly being tested to see where we're at, and to see if there needs to be any improvement. In fact, there was a test going on in the church this past week.

The electrical wiring of the church was being tested. You'll be glad to know that I wasn't doing the test. But, ironically, the man who was doing the test, he was also called Murdo Campbell.

[2 : 22] And, thankfully, well, the wiring, it has been passed as electrically safe. So, life is full of tests. And we go through life being tested, or having things tested. Because the purpose of the test is to see where we are at, and to see if there needs to be any improvement.

But, as we all know, life not only gives us tests that seem almost insignificant. Life also puts before us tests that will challenge us.

Tests that may even cause us pain and heartache. Tests that will stretch us. Life and all the complexities of it. Life puts things before us that will even test our faith.

Life tests our faith to see if we have any faith at all. But, you know, we must always remember that the purpose of a test, a test of faith, it's not to weaken our faith, but to strengthen it.

And that's what we see here with Abraham. Abraham's faith was tested. And his faith was tested in the most difficult way and under the most trying of circumstances. And yet, Abraham, as we read, he remained obedient to the Lord throughout his test.

[3 : 33] And Abraham, he's mentioned here in this chapter of faith, because Abraham looked to Jesus by faith. Abraham looked to Jesus by faith. In the midst of all that Abraham was going through and the test that he was being presented to, presented with, Abraham looked to Jesus by faith.

And, you know, what's remarkable is that Jesus affirmed this in the New Testament. When Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said, Abraham rejoiced to see my day and was glad.

Abraham rejoiced to see my day. But, you know, when did Abraham see Jesus' day? He was over nearly 3,000 years before Jesus.

But, you know, Abraham saw Jesus' day on Mount Moriah when he offered up his only begotten son, Isaac. And that's because Abraham had faith in Jesus Christ.

And as we said before, this chapter of faith is all about, it's all about having faith in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11, it's seeking to us answer the question, what does it mean to have faith in Jesus

Christ?

[4 : 44] And this question that we've looked at in this chapter, the question was being asked because this letter, the letter to the Hebrews, it was written to people who believed in the existence of God, they attended all the religious gatherings, they knew their Bible, but they didn't have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

And this letter, it was written to remind them that belief in the existence of God and attending religious gatherings and knowing your Bible, what we're being told in this letter is that none of these things will get you into heaven.

Because, as it says here, you need wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ. You need to look to Jesus Christ by faith. And you need to see that He is your only hope in life and in death.

And, you know, Hebrews 11, it's so relevant to us as a congregation. Because, as I've said before, there are so many of you here, like the people to whom this letter was written, you believe in the existence of God, you regularly attend church, you believe what the Bible says, you read what the Bible says, you look religious, but still you don't have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

You're still not saved. Still not saved. But, you know, as we consider Abraham's test of faith this morning, you'll be reminded, once again, that you need to look to Jesus Christ by faith.

[6 : 12] Like Abraham, you need to have saving faith in the Son of God. And so, as we consider Abraham's faith, I'd like us just to see three things.

I want us to see Abraham's obedience, Abraham's offering, and Abraham's offspring. Three things. Abraham's obedience, Abraham's offering, and Abraham's offspring.

So, if we look first of all at Abraham's obedience. Abraham's obedience. Look again at verse 17. It says, 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.

Now, what's the first word that a child usually learns? Well, in my experience, it's the word no. And the reason for this is that, well, with three young boys in the house, obedience is a very hard discipline to learn.

Because, well, they have their own plans, and they want to do their own thing, and they want to have things their own way. Obedience is a very hard discipline to learn. But disobedience, as we all know, it's natural.

[7 : 30] Because disobedience, it always begins with the word I. I want, I must, I need, I will have. But, you know, it's interesting that the word obey, it comes from the root word, to hear.

And that's because obedience is always responding to what is heard. And that's what we see with children. They only obey when they listen and respond to the command being given.

And that's what we see with ourselves. We only obey when we listen and respond to the command being given. But when we consider Abraham's life, Abraham's life was often characterized by obedience.

We see that in verse 8 of this chapter. When the Lord spoke to him, the Lord commanded Abraham to leave his home and go and live in a foreign land. And we're told in verse 8, it says, Abraham obeyed.

When he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going. Abraham obeyed. He listened to the word of God and he responded to the command that was being given to him by God.

[8 : 42] But, you know, of course, like all of us, there were times in Abraham's life when he was disobedient. There were times when Abraham wanted to do his own thing and go his own way and have his own plans.

Like us, Abraham made a mess of things. Abraham, he pretended that his wife was his sister so that he wouldn't get into trouble. Abraham fathered a child with his housemaid instead of his wife because he thought that that would fulfill God's plan of a promised son.

There were certainly times in Abraham's life when Abraham disobeyed but as you read through Abraham's life, you see that when Abraham got older, Abraham learned the importance of obedience.

Abraham learned the importance of listening to God and obeying God's word. Because, you know, when Isaac was finally born, Abraham saw how faithful the Lord had been to his promises.

When Isaac was born, Abraham discovered that the Lord is trustworthy and that the Lord is worth listening to. Because, the Lord had promised to Abraham at the age of 75 years old, the Lord

promised Abraham, you will have a son.

[9 : 56] But Abraham had to wait 25 years. He had to wait till he was 100 years old before that son would be born. And Abraham, he had to learn to wait. He had to learn to be obedient.

He had to learn to trust the Lord. Abraham had to learn to listen to God's word and respond to God's commands. And it's when Abraham learned obedience, it's when Abraham learned to listen to God's word that God tested him.

And we saw that from our reading in Genesis 22, which is the passage that these verses refer to in Hebrews 11. Because in the opening verse of Genesis 22, we're told, it came to pass after these things.

And these things was after the birth of the promised son, Isaac. It came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham. And God said to him, Abraham.

And Abraham responded immediately and said, here am I. And what we have to see from those opening words is that Abraham learned obedience.

[11 : 03] Abraham learned that the Lord was trustworthy and that the Lord was faithful to all his promises. Abraham learned to listen to the word of God and respond to God's command.

And that's what we see when God sought to test Abraham. God spoke and said, Abraham. And Abraham immediately heard God's word and listened to God's word and responded to God's word. He responded to God's command. God's command to Abraham. Abraham. Verse 2. Take now 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.

But you know, when you read that narrative in Genesis 22, it doesn't focus upon God's command. It focuses upon Abraham's obedience to God's command.

Because we're told in the following verse, verse 3, Abraham rose up early. Abraham immediately responded in the morning, saddled his donkey, took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son.

[12 : 13] He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he arose and went to the place which God had told him. When Abraham heard the word of God, Abraham listened and obeyed.

Abraham listened to God's word and responded immediately to God's command. Why? Because he knew God was faithful. Abraham knew that God was trustworthy.

Abraham knew that God was reliable. Abraham knew that God and his word was worthy of his trust. And you know, my friend, that's the teaching of this passage.

That's what we've been reminded of this morning. That God is faithful and his word is faithful. God is trustworthy and his word is trustworthy. God is reliable and his word is reliable.

Therefore, we need to listen to God's word. We need to hear what God is saying to us in the Bible. And we need to respond in obedience to God's command.

[13 : 17] What is the command of the Bible? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Confess your sins. And you'll be forgiven. Turn to Jesus and you'll be healed.

Commit your life to Jesus Christ by faith and you'll receive the gift of eternal life. My friend, God has spoken to you through his word, the Bible. And let's be honest, this isn't the first time that God has spoken to you.

Because he's been speaking to you for years. He's been speaking to you throughout your life. He's been speaking to you through many of the situations and circumstances that you have found yourself in.

And even through every testing and trying time in your life, God has been speaking to you. And he's been calling you to listen to his voice and respond in obedience to his command.

But you know, my friend, failure to listen to God's word and failure to respond to God's command, that's disobedience.

[14 : 21] It's plain and simple. It's disobedience. And disobedience, as we said, it always begins with I. I want, I must, I need, I will have, I'll seek the Lord when I want to.

I'll become a Christian when my time is right. I'll commit my life to Jesus Christ when I need him in my life. I don't need him just now. But my friend, the word of God and the command of God, it never says later.

It never says tomorrow. It always says now. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation.

You know, there's a preacher who often says, today is God's day. Tomorrow is the devil's day. Today is God's day. And this is the wonder of it. God is speaking to you this morning. Right here, right now, from his word. And he's calling you to listen and respond in obedience to his command.

[15 : 33] He's calling you to look to his son Jesus by faith and commit your life to him. And you know, that's what Abraham did.

He looked to Jesus by faith. He was obedient. And so we see Abraham's obedience. But then secondly, we see Abraham's offering.

Abraham's offering. Look at verse 17. It says, 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, of whom it was said, Through Isaac, your offspring will be named.

As we said, these verses in Hebrews 11, they refer to the passage in Genesis 22. But you know, what's so beautiful about them is that they present to us one of the clearest Old Testament pictures of the cross of Jesus Christ.

But you know, even in the chapters leading up to Genesis 22, there are all these parallels that can be seen between the experience of Isaac and the experience of Jesus.

[16 : 49] Because, well, there was the years of waiting. The years of waiting that Abraham and Sarah had to endure as they waited upon God's promise. The Lord had promised that Abraham would have a son and that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

And after 25 years of waiting, the son of promise, he finally arrived. At the age of 90, Sarah gives birth to this son, her firstborn son, Isaac.

And through the birth of Isaac, Abraham knew that God's word is faithful and that God's promise is trustworthy. And you know, that's a picture of the promise of salvation.

Because for thousands of years, the Lord's people were waiting for the promised Messiah. They were waiting for this promise to be fulfilled. The promise that was given way back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, that the seed of the woman, he will come and crush the head of the serpent and that through him all the nations of the world will experience the blessing of God.

And like Abraham and Sarah, the Lord's people, they'd lost hope. The Jews had lost hope in the promise being fulfilled. until one day Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

[18 : 07] Then he was born in a stable in Bethlehem. And it was only then that many of the Lord's people knew that God is faithful and that God's promises are trustworthy. But you know, what's remarkable is that before we reach the cross, there's another parable, parallel, found in Genesis.

Genesis. Because Genesis chapter 21 we see joy and celebration at the birth of Isaac. But it doesn't last long.

You come to chapter 22 and it's a complete contrast. There's no joy, there's no reason to celebrate. Abraham's dancing, it's now turned into mourning. And you know, the same was true for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

You read in Luke chapter 1, we're told that Mary's soul rejoiced and magnified God for the promise of the Saviour. But in the following chapter, Mary was told by Simeon that a sword will pierce through her soul with pain and sorrow.

You know, there's all these parallels between the experience of Isaac and the experience of Jesus. But as we said, Genesis 22, it presents to us one of the clearest Old Testament pictures of the cross of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 23] because as we said, we see Father Abraham obediently giving up his only son to sacrifice, as a sacrifice to God.

God says in Genesis 22, take now 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.

And of course, God's command to Abraham had not only went against every paternal instinct to protect your children with your own life, it would have also had detrimental effects upon the promise.

The promise that through Abraham's seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And yet when the test came, Abraham faithfully obeyed.

But notice the command that Abraham received. Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love.

[20 : 27] And verse 17 of Hebrews, it also picks up on this point because it says, 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.

son. The command Abraham received was not only to sacrifice his son Isaac, whom he loved, but the Bible literally says that Isaac was Abraham's only begotten son.

Now we know that Abraham did have another son. He had a son called Ishmael that was born to the house made Hagar. But Ishmael wasn't the son of promise. Isaac was the son of promise. Isaac was the son whom the father loved. Isaac was the only begotten son. And you know, it's another picture of Jesus. Jesus is the only begotten son of God the father.

John 3.16, the most well-known verse in the Bible, reminds us of that very fact. That God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.

[21 : 42] The father gave his only begotten son, his only son, the son whom he loved and the son obediently submitted to the father's womb. And you know, that's what we read in Genesis 22.

Abraham rose early in the morning. He saddled his donkey. He took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son and he split the wood for the burnt offering. He arose and went to the place that God had showed him.

And Abraham, he obediently went to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his only begotten son. And what's remarkable is that that's where Jerusalem is now built.

Jerusalem is built in the land of Moriah and that's where Jesus was crucified. He was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified, as we know, on a Roman cross and humiliated before an onlooking world.

But Jesus was there as a sacrifice for sin. He was there because that's where the father put him. He was delivered up by his father to be crucified so that you and I could have our sins forgiven and have the promise of eternal life.

[22 : 55] He was delivered up by his father. But there's more. There's more. Genesis 22 says that Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering. He laid Isaac, his son, on it.

Then he took the fire in his hand and the knife. And we're told that the two of them went on together. The two of them went on together. And you know what it ought to remind us is that the cross is all about the father and the son.

The cross is all about God the father willingly and obediently giving up his only begotten son, as a sacrifice for our sin. Because it's there at the cross that God the father made Jesus to be sin for us. Jesus took our sin. He bore our sin. He bled for our sin. He died for our sin. Jesus became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God in him.

And this is the wonder of it. We can be saved by trusting in Jesus Christ with all our heart and committing our life to him by faith. Simple as that.

[24 : 11] But you know I love the narrative of Genesis 22. Read it again when you go home. Genesis 22 it presents to us Abraham and Isaac they're walking to the top of Mount Moriah.

And as they're walking we hear Isaac saying what are we doing here? He says where are we going? Isaac asks he says I see the fire and I see the wood but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham he makes this beautiful statement my son God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. And we're told that when they came to the place that God had told Abraham in the land of Moriah Abraham he built the altar he placed the wood in order he bound Isaac his son and laid him on top of the altar and notice when you read the narrative in Genesis 22 Isaac doesn't open his mouth doesn't speak he remains silent just like Jesus when he went to the cross Jesus was led as a lamb to the slaughter as a sheep before his shearer is silent he opened not his mouth he submitted to the will of his father then you have Abraham he's stretching out his hand to lay to slay his son and the angel of the Lord he calls to him from heaven and says Abraham Abraham and Abraham hearing what the word of God he says here I am here I am

Lord doing what you've commanded me and the Lord says to him don't do anything to the boy I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son your only begotten son from me and on hearing the Lord's command Abraham responds in obedience the test was over Abraham had offered up his only son Isaac Abraham had remained obedient throughout his test why because he looked to Jesus by faith as we said earlier Jesus affirms this he says Abraham Abraham saw my day and he was glad Abraham saw my day but you know I believe that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day he rejoiced when Isaac asked him that question where is the lamb for a burnt offering where is the lamb and you know Abraham he makes this beautiful statement

[27 : 06] God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering and you read the narrative that day on Mount Moriah Isaac 2nd Abraham they offered up a ram they offered a ram as a sacrifice to the Lord but Abraham he rejoiced to see the day of Jesus because it would be then that God would provide Jesus as a lamb God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering and as we know that's what John the Baptist says he looks at Jesus and says behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world you know in the midst of all that he was going through in his trial Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Jesus because he looked to Jesus by faith and that's what we're to do too whatever trial or whatever test we're going through today whatever worry or whatever concern we're being confronted with we're to remain obedient to

God's faithful word and trust God's promises because they're trustworthy and true and we're to keep looking to Jesus by faith we're to keep our eyes firmly upon him because he's the author and he's the finisher of our faith but there's one more thing I'd like us to consider lastly and briefly we've seen Abraham's obedience Abraham's offering but lastly Abraham's offspring Abraham's offspring we're told we'll read again in verse 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 of whom it was said through Isaac shall your offspring be named he considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead from which figuratively speaking he did receive him back now as we said

Genesis 22 it gives to us this clear picture of Jesus and the cross of Calvary but as we read here in verse 19 it reveals to us that Abraham not only rejoiced to see Jesus' day the day when Jesus would be crucified Abraham also rejoiced to see the day that Jesus would be resurrected Abraham rejoiced as it says there to know that God was able to resurrect his son from the dead and it's clear in the passage of Genesis 22 we're told on the third day you read the narrative on the third day just before Abraham and Isaac before they set off on their own together towards Mount Moriah

Abraham said to the two young men that were with him stay here with the donkey the lad and I will go and worship and we will come back to you we will come back to you Abraham believed that if Isaac was killed God would raise him from the dead

Abraham believed that God would resurrect his only begotten son from the dead Abraham looked to Jesus his day and rejoiced because that's what he was looking forward to the day when God would resurrect his only begotten son and you know that's what God did God the father gave his son Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sin and on the third day God resurrected his only begotten son from the dead and now through the power of the resurrection through faith in Jesus Christ the promise of eternal life is now to whosoever whosoever the promise of blessing from Abraham's offspring is to all the nations of the earth the promise has been fulfilled and you know this is the point this is the point of the passage that the promise of blessing is to whosoever the promise of blessing is to whosoever that's John 3 16

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life my friend this promise of eternal life it's to whosoever which means that this promise includes everyone and excludes no one whosoever whether we're religious or not whether we're good or bad male or female rich or poor young or old educated or uneducated whatever our situation whatever our background whatever our circumstances whatever our past whatever our present this promise is a promise to whosoever whosoever you know the promise it reaches as far and as wide as possible it takes in everyone the promise takes in everyone but then it becomes as narrow as possible it becomes as narrow as possible because it says whosoever believes whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life and you know this is what the life of Abraham is teaching us

[32 : 42] Abraham's obedience Abraham's offering Abraham's offspring it's being presented to us in Hebrews 11 to remind us that we need to have saving faith in Jesus Christ because even though Abraham's faith was tested Abraham had faith in Jesus Christ Abraham looked to Jesus by faith

and he rejoiced and you know that's what you have to do today that's what you have to do you must look to Jesus by faith and rejoice rejoice in the cross rejoice in the empty tomb rejoice in the promise the promise of eternal life that is offered to whosoever whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life do you believe my friend do you believe everything's been done for you you must come and you must come today may the

Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for the wonder of the cross of what Jesus has done for us and that we thank thee Lord that even in Abraham's day he was able to rejoice in the cross to see what Jesus would do for him and for many throughout this world we thank thee O Lord that the promise is to whosoever that whosoever believes in him they will not perish but have eternal life help us Lord to trust help us to commit ourselves to Jesus and to walk with him day by day for now is the accepted time and today is the day of salvation continue with us Lord we ask thee bless this day to us the Lord's day a day that is so precious help us Lord to reflect upon thy word and to meditate upon it go before us we ask keep us we pray for Jesus sake amen we shall bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing to God's praise in

Psalm 25 Psalm 25 in the Scottish Psalter page 231 Psalm 25 we're singing at verse 4 down to the verse March 7 Psalm 25 at verse 4 this Psalm it's a wonderful prayer David is saying show me teach me lead me what better prayer to have when you are seeking the Lord show me thy ways O Lord thy paths so teach thou me and do thou lead me in thy truth therein my teacher be for thou art God that does to me salvation send and I upon thee all the day expecting to attend we'll we'll sing we'll sing we'll sing down to the verse March 7 of Psalm 25 to God's praise show me show me thy ways

O Lord thy path so teach thou me and do thou lead me in thy truth than in my teacher be or who behind Mike and do además who need to y■■■ to ese■■■■ And I have worn thee all the day Expecting to attend Thy tender mercies, Lord

I pray thee to remember And loving kindnesses for thee Have been awful forever My sins and faults of you Do thou, O Lord, forget After thy mercy Think on me And for thy goodness great The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
[38 : 26] Be with you all Now and forevermore Amen