

Introduction

Trials and testings are an important and necessary part of your Christian life:

v God's Word tells you to *expect* trials and testings:

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Acts 14:22 "...[Paul exhorted] *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Commenting on why you should expect trials and testings, Dr. Warren Wiersbe writes,

"Because we are God's "scattered people" and not God's "sheltered people," we must [expect] trials...Some trials come simply because we are human - sickness, accidents, disappointments, even seeming tragedies. Other trials come [especially] because we are Christians...Satan fights us, the world opposes us, and this makes for a life of battle."¹

v God's Word also tells you to *evaluate* trials and testings:

James 1:2 "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials..."

The word "count" is a financial term meaning "to evaluate." Commenting on how you should evaluate trials and testings, again Wiersbe writes,

"Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to "count it all joy." If we live only for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better."²

Abraham had come to a place of maturity in his walk with the Lord where he could both expect and evaluate his trials and testings:

^ You see that he expected trials and testings. He obeys rather than objecting to this severe test.

%o You see that he evaluated trials and testings in his comments to his servants and to his son along the way. Even though he knows he is going to offer Isaac as a living sacrifice, he has evaluated the test in the light of God's Word and says, **in verse 5**, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you" and, in verse 8 "My son, God will provide...Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

As a Christian you should expect trials and testings. To mature as a Christian you should evaluate your trials and testings. Abraham did both. We learn two helpful principles from him:

¹Warren Wiersbe, *Be Mature*, p. 22

²*Ibid.*, p. 23

#1 Your Heavenly Father
Will Prove Your Love For Him

#2 Your Heavenly Father
Has Proven His Love For You

#1 Your Heavenly Father
Will Prove Your Love For Him

It will help you to put this episode in Abraham's life, and your own experiences, into proper perspective if you understand the use of the word translated "tested" in verse one. It is translated "tempted" in the King James, "tested" in the New King James. The word means "to prove" with the intent of *approving*. It is not a solicitation to evil, as you normally think of the word "tempt." As James writes in the New Testament, (James 1:13) "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone." Even the word "test" is not full enough in its meaning as we use it today. It is not a test to measure failure, but to reveal faithfulness. That's why the better English word is "proved"; "God *proved* Abraham..."

What did God prove? He proved to Abraham, to angels looking on, and to anyone who ever encounters this text, that Abraham loved his heavenly Father more than anything else. He loved Him more than his prosperity...He loved Him more than His paternity...He loved Him more than the immediate fulfillment of His promises.

Genesis 22:1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Three times in these verses Abraham says, "Here I am" - in verses one, seven, and eleven. Taken together they would be a good study in obedience. "Here I am," in verse one, prepared to obey; "Here I am," in verse seven, prompt in my obedience; "Here I am," in verse eleven, performing obediently.

As a Christian you want to be able to say, "Here I am" to your heavenly Father. As with Abraham, it requires preparation, promptness, and performance.

Genesis 22:2 Then He said, "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."

God hasn't forgotten about Ishmael, Abraham's other son. In fact, we've seen how lovingly God cared for the boy and his mother, Hagar. There are several reasons why God calls Isaac Abraham's "only" son. One is to emphasize a spiritual principle: God does not recognize the efforts of your flesh to please Him!

Genesis 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Abraham saw to the details himself, saddling his own donkey and splitting his own wood. Even though his heart was heavy, his hope was not hindered. He didn't fall into discouragement or become downcast.

In our trials and testings we have a natural tendency to sulk. Rather than sulking we should seek God's purpose.

Genesis 22:4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

Genesis 22:5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

Genesis 22:6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

Genesis 22:7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Genesis 22:8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

Abraham had come to a point of maturity. Earlier he had faltered when asked to leave his father behind; earlier he had faltered when there was a famine in the land. Now, called upon to do much more, he is proven faithful.

A lifetime of experience is certainly one of the keys to spiritual maturity. But experience alone does not always produce maturity. Many experienced saints still face trials and testings faltering. Abraham had learned something more: He was able to evaluate his trials and testings in the light of God's Word and God's ways. You see it in his comments to his servants and to his son.

^ Even while obedient to God's command to offer his son as a living sacrifice, he tells his servants that both he *and* Isaac will return!

Genesis 22:5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

%o Even while obedient to God's command to offer his son as a living sacrifice, he tells Isaac that God will provide Himself for the offering!

Genesis 22:7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Genesis 22:8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

Abraham had been evaluating the test. We learn this more fully in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11:17-19,

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

Hebrews 11:18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"

Hebrews 11:19 concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Notice the writer to the Hebrews says Abraham came to a *conclusion*. He had been evaluating the test. He had God's Word, which told him that through Isaac's children he and all the nations of the world would be blessed. He was able to evaluate his trial in the light of that sure, unchangeable word, and conclude something about God's ways. Though no one had ever been raised from the dead from the time of Adam until Abraham, God would have to do so in order to keep His word!

Maturity in your trials and testings means you evaluate them in the light of God's Word and determine something of His ways with you.

Genesis 22:9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

Genesis 22:10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Genesis 22:11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

Genesis 22:12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me."

God already "knew" the outcome. As we said, this wasn't a test of failure but a proof of faithfulness. This word "know" is used almost one thousand times and has a wide variety of meanings. It is the Hebrew word "yada." It can be used, for example, to describe the most intimate of relationships both physically and spiritually. Adam "knew" his wife Eve - referring to their intimacy in sex. You read, in Exodus 33:17, that God "knew" Moses face to face - describing their intimacy in spiritual matters.

When the text says, "now I *know* that you fear God," it is a description in terms Abraham could understand of the intimacy of his love for his heavenly Father. In other words, God had proven their intimate spiritual love in a way that Abraham, angels, and anyone else could see.

Genesis 22:13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

Genesis 22:14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

A sacrifice was still required for their worship. Intimacy with God is only possible through the blood of an innocent substitute. God's love for mankind cannot counteract or overrule His holiness.

Genesis 22:15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,

Genesis 22:16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*;

Genesis 22:17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Genesis 22:18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Genesis 22:19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

God had already unconditionally promised these things previously to Abraham. Abraham's obedience was not required for God to receive these unique promises; Abraham's disobedience could not revoke these unique promises.

Yet the Lord says He is blessing Abraham "*because* you have done this thing," and "*because* you have obeyed my voice." Is this a contradiction? Are these promises to be considered as conditional after all?

The answer is "no" to both questions. What you have here is a statement of *assurance* for Abraham's benefit. God's promises to Abraham were unconditional; indeed, Abraham believed that they were and acted upon them. But it is a human trait that we can afterward come to doubt God's unconditional promises. They remain true, but we are uncertain of them. We lack assurance. Assurance is the mindful realization that God's promises are indeed true. This experience on Mount Moriah could give Abraham assurance if ever

he were to grow doubtful. Abraham always had these promises; *because* he had obeyed, he could have assurance as well.

Do you need assurance that God is working in your life? Obey Him and look for evidences of His grace at work in your heart.

God blesses Abraham, despite the fact that God withheld him from offering Isaac. Whenever God prevents your sacrifice, He always credits it to you anyway! He recognizes the intent of the heart.

It is also true, of course, that you can deceive yourself in this area by thinking that you would sacrifice all to the Lord but never doing so. Sooner or later God will prove your love for Him and you will know what is in your heart.

Genesis 22:20 Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, "Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor:

Genesis 22:21 "Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,

Genesis 22:22 "Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel."

Genesis 22:23 And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

Genesis 22:24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.

The chapter ends with an important genealogy. God was preparing a bride for Isaac, Rebekkah, from Abraham's own family.

God is preparing a bride for *your* son, a groom for *your* daughter!

= Your heavenly Father will prove your love for Him. He wants you to "know" Him - to experience the spiritual intimacy that Abraham and others did. He may very well ask you for that which is most dear, in order to show you that you hold Him dearest of all. Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee wrote,

"[Isaac] represents many gifts of God's grace. Before God gives them our hands are empty. Afterwards they are full. Sometimes God reaches out His hand to take ours in fellowship. Then we need an empty hand to put into His. But when we have received His gifts...*our* hands are full, and when God puts out His hand, we have no empty hand for Him...Isaac can be done without, but God is eternal."³

³quoted by Boice in Genesis, Volume 2, p. 219

When your test comes, reach out your empty hand to take God's in fellowship with Him.

#2 Your Heavenly Father Has Proven His Love For You

As you no doubt realize by now, there is more going on in Genesis Twenty-two than Abraham sacrificing Isaac. The episode on Mount Moriah foreshadows Calvary, where God *did* sacrifice *His* Son, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It was there that your heavenly Father has proven His love for you.

Verse 2 Then He said, "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."

Here, as nowhere else, you are shown the Father's heart, Who the Scripture says in Romans 8:32, "spared not His own son." What God asked Abraham to do on Mount Moriah He would Himself do centuries later.

Verse 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

The Father set apart the Son for sacrifice. Just so, Jesus was marked out for sacrifice from all eternity. He was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

Verse 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

Abraham and Isaac arrived at Mount Moriah on the third day. Abraham left the day after God commanded him, and it took three days to get to Moriah, thus making a total of four days. This corresponds perfectly to Exodus 12:3, where the Passover Lamb was to be kept and examined for four days before offering it. Likewise Jesus Christ was examined for four days after He entered Jerusalem before being crucified.

Verse 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

These two men witnessed Isaac carrying the wood up the mountain, but what took place between him and his father they were not permitted to see. Likewise at Calvary there were two men, the two thieves, but like all the spectators of that scene, they were not permitted to behold what transpired between the Father and the Son on heaven's altar - three hours of darkness concealing from every human eye the divine transaction of the payment of our sins.

Verse 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

Isaac was no toddler; he was a full grown man in his thirties, one who could have easily resisted the older Abraham. Instead he carried the wood and submitted willingly. Jesus, carrying His cross down the Via Dolorosa, was in perfect, willful submission to His crucifixion. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," was His glad cry to the Father.

Verse 6 and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

Fire is the emblem of God's judgment upon sin. The fire of God's wrath against sin broke forth on Jesus as He hung upon the cross. There He was, as Isaiah says, "smitten of God" (Isaiah 53:4).

Verses 7 & 8 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

The verses literally read, "God will provide Himself the lamb." This tells us two things: Only God could provide the appropriate Lamb, and the provision was to satisfy Himself. If sacrifice for sin was ever to be found God Himself must provide it; nothing man can or could do could meet the divine requirements. And the offering was first and foremost for God - to satisfy His holiness.

Verses Nine through fourteen describe the ram being offered up in Isaac's place. Jesus died in your place! You were already in the place of death, bound, unable to help yourself, with God's wrath against sin about to fall and consume you. But Jesus was provided to take your place. The wrath of God fell upon Him.

Hebrews 11:17-19 "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son* of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called, concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."

From this you learn that Genesis Twenty-two presents to us in type not only Jesus offered upon the altar, but Jesus *risen from the dead!* In Abraham's mind, Isaac was "dead" for three days - but he received him back alive. Jesus was three days and three nights in the earth - *but He rose on the third day!*

= The first use of the word "love" in the Bible occurs here, in verse two, describing the love of Abraham for his son. You've seen that it is really a description of your heavenly Father's love for His only begotten son, Jesus. In offering His son your heavenly Father has proven His love for you.

Any trial or test you have ever faced or ever will face is set in the context of your Father's love for you. When the trial or test comes, let Him prove *your* love for *Him!*

Conclusion

In verse fourteen you read,

Genesis 22:14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

The statement at the end, "in the mount of the Lord it shall be provided," is a prophecy. Just as God provided a ram, He would later provide Jesus as the once-for-all Lamb.

There is more than this. The place where Abraham offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah would later be the site of the Temple where offering was made for sin.

There is more even than this! Mount Moriah has several peaks. Just above the place that Abraham offered Isaac, the place where the Temple was located, is Calvary - the very place where Jesus was provided as the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

"In the mount of the Lord" it *has been* provided!

Rapture! In Genesis 22, Abraham left the donkey and the two young men at the foot of the hill as he and Isaac went up to the top of Moriah for the famous offering of his son. After the episode concludes with the substitution of the ram, it lists those that then returned to Beersheba:

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

Genesis 22:19

Where's Isaac? Obviously, Isaac also returned with Abraham and the two young men. But we are fascinated that the Holy Spirit appears to have edited the person of Isaac out of the record from the time he was offered until he is united with his bride two chapters later! We believe this was deliberate to have the narrative fully conform to the type.