

## Tried-And-True Faith—Genesis 22:1–14

### *Introduction, Overview*

- **“Life is a test.”**— Life often puts us in all kinds of unexpected circumstances. These circumstances are like test questions, placed in front of us, to see how we will deal with them.
- And our response to the circumstances will reveal the true nature of us: what we care about the most, what we fear most to lose, and how deep our faith is in God. These will be clearly revealed in the test of life.
- For example, what would you do when you scratch a brand-new BMW on the side of the road, and no one is around? What would you do when you walk out of the supermarket and find that what you bought is missing from the receipt? When you have a conflict with your spouse, or when your coworker doesn’t like your idea, what kind of thoughts and words will you respond with? When things go wrong and God’s sovereign plan disrupts your own plans, how will you respond in your heart?
- **How can believers pass God’s tests faithfully?** This is the lesson we learn from the story of Abraham’s offering of Isaac:  
*Six characteristics of a mature faith.*

### *Context*

- “After these things” (v. 1) points to the importance of the context — after what things? — brief summary of Abraham’s life account.

### *Regarding Abraham—*

- Beginning of a life of faith: called by God, obeyed immediately (Genesis 12)
- **Yet, his faith is not perfect:** He lied to pagan kings about his wife Sarah, twice, by calling Sarah his sister (Genesis 12; Genesis 20); he presumed to solve Sarah’s infertility problem with Hagar (Genesis 16); He laughed at God’s word that the old couple could still bear a son (Genesis 17).

Abraham’s faith needed growth, just like ours.

### *Regarding God—*

- Although Abraham’s faith was not perfect, **God is faithful.**
- Examples: God sustained Abraham’s family as they went about in the land as nomads; He protected Sarah’s purity through miraculous interventions; He granted military success when his nephew Lot needed rescue; He brought about the promised birth of Isaac.
- After seeing God’s faithfulness all these times, has Abraham grown in faith? – That’s exactly the point of the test.

## Regarding Trials—

- **Key word: Test** (synonym: trial)
- **Purpose: To test our faith**, so as to prove if we love Him as we say we do.
- **Core: Keep God’s commandments**, which indicates how much you love and trust Him
- **Source: God!** (The original text emphasizes the subject: the source of testing is none other than the faithful God!)

## Six Characteristics of A Mature Faith

### 1. The Faith that Listens - Listening to God’s Word

- “Here I am” (v. 1): ready to listen to God’s Word  
Is your faith a faith that listens? Do you often listen to God’s Word in the Bible?  
**Psalm 119:11** “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”
- “Your son”, “your only son”, “whom you love”, “Isaac.” (Verse 2): four terms to emphasize Isaac’s precious identity, to challenge Abraham’s emotions. Isaac is the son of promise (Genesis 17:19).
- “Offer him as a burnt offering” (v. 2): **No cost, no test.** A trial involves pain, suffering, or loss. Trials are God’s tests. He tests our faith in Him with the things we love and cherish.

### 2. The Faith that Obeys - Obeying God’s Command

- He demanded no explanation. He didn’t ask why. All he needed to know: it was God’s command.  
Instead of asking "Why?" in the trial, it is better to ask "What does God want me to do? How can I glorify God in this circumstance?"  
Example: “give thanks in all circumstances.” ( 1 Thess 5:18); “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.” (Phil 2:14)
- “rose early in the morning” (v. 3): sought the first possible opportunity to obey; a series of verbs unfolds his obedient action.
- Nothing is said about this 3-day journey (v. 4). What was going through Abraham’s mind? He must be reflecting upon God’s faithfulness along the way and God’s promises, in order to prepare his heart to obey God’s command.

### 3. The Faith that Reasons - Reasoning from God’s Truth

- “I and the boy..... come again to you” (v. 5): How did Abraham know that Isaac will come back?
- **Hebrews 11:17-19** God’s obvious promise + His power to raise the dead to life = Isaac must be raised from the dead!
- This is biblical reasoning: He understood God's Words and God's power, and based on this, he reasoned about the circumstance.  
Facing trials, do you turn to God's words and use His truth to reason and evaluate your circumstance?

#### 4. The Faith that Trusts - Trusting in God's Provision

- Verses 7 and 8 record the only time in this entire story where Abraham talks with Isaac. It is a very important conversation. (Bookend-type repetition for emphasis)
- "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering": a key statement of faith. But he wouldn't know it was going to be a lamb. The previous quote from Hebrews indicates that he really thought God was going to have him sacrifice Isaac and then raise him from the dead. Why then does he say this? What does resurrection have to do with the lamb? Answer: the sin-atoning sacrifice. "The wages of sin is death." Think: the animal skin for Adam and Eva, the ritual of atoning sacrifice, type vs. antitype.
- "God Himself will provide": the original text again emphasizes the subject "God": the God who *tests* us is the same God who *provides*. What He provides may not always be what we want, but what we need.
- "for Himself": Abraham didn't say God will provide for *me*, but God will provide for *Himself!* What God provides for believers is ultimately **for his own glory**, to **show what a loving and faithful God He is!** Abraham is not the hero of this story. The real hero is God, the faithful loving God who tests us and provides for us for His name's sake.
- We have already seen God's greatest provision on the cross—to solve the problem of our sin!

**John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

**Romans 8:32** "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

How to pass God's test? The father of faith tells us: "**God will provide!**"

If you suffer loss in a trial: loss of property, loss of a relative or friend, even loss of your own life, will God still provide?

If the church suffers some apparent loss in its growing process, will God provide?

God's promise will not fail, and we must trust God's provision.

#### 5. The Faith that Perseveres - Persevering through God's Test

- Sometimes it takes a persevering faith to see God's provision.
- The key of verses 9 and 10 is the emotional tension at the climax of the trial. The scripture again presents a series of verbs to unfold the pictures in front of our eyes, like the slow motion in a movie. Abraham built the altar, set the wood, bound Isaac, laid him on the altar, stretched out his hand and took the knife, to kill his son.
- The cost of obeying God's commands is sometimes very high, which requires a faith that **perseveres to the end**: you don't just obey when it's easy and back off when you need to sacrifice. But even when it costs you something dear, the faith that perseveres will obey to the end, because to you, pleasing God is more valuable than anything else. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. "
- "Now I know that you fear God" (v. 11): God Himself affirmed Abraham's faith: a fearer of God! Will your test paper have this comment?

- “For...” (v. 12): Pay attention to causal relationship—God affirmed Abraham’s faith because of his obedient action. **Obedience in testing proves a heart that fears God (James 2:21,26).** Has your faith had the privilege of being proven through testing? Has God asked you to sacrifice something dear? (examples.....) These may not be as dramatic as Abraham’s test, but if you have done it out of faith, then praise the Lord that you will receive the same comment on your test: A fearer of God! However small your faith is now, as long as it’s genuine, it will grow, just as Abraham’s faith, because the God who tests us is also the God who faithfully provides.

## 6. The Faith that Worships - Worshipping God’s Holy Name

- Verse 13, seeing God’s provision, faith becoming sight, how does Abraham respond?  
**Worship!**
- Expression of worship #1: **Sacrifice.**  
1 Peter 2:5 says believers are “a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”. What sacrifices are we offering? Obviously not the sin-atoning sacrifice (the only sin-atoning sacrifice is the blood of Jesus), but a sacrifice of worship
- “in the place of his son” (v. 13): foreshadowing Jesus’s substitutionary atonement. Just as the ram took the place of Isaac, so Jesus took our place. He suffered the punishment of our sins in our place, and fulfilled God’s righteousness in our place.  
  - **Isaiah 53:5** “he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.”
  - **2 Corinthian 5:21** “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
  - **John 1:29** “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”
- Expression of worship #2: **Remembering God’s work** (by naming the place)
- “Jehovah Jireh”: “Yahweh Will Provide”. The proper noun reflects the intimate relationship between Abraham and God. The message that Abraham wants to convey to you and me is all in this name: Jehovah Jireh, Yahweh will provide!

### *Summary*

#### **The ultimate goal of God testing believers:**

**1 Peter 1:6-7** “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This is certainly true of Abraham. May it be true of us too!