



Sermon for Mar 21, 2021, "Abraham's Faith Tested"

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 22:15-18 ¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸ and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

Introduction: A story that is difficult to understand, but inevitable

Today's text is about Abraham offering Isaac to the Lord as a burnt offering. There is a lot of theological content in this story that is difficult for us to understand or evaluate.

However, we have to deal with this story, because this story is so important. But, just because this story is heavy, we shouldn't oversimplify this story.

In today's sermon, let's look at why the Lord tested Abraham, what it means to fear the Lord, and what it is about faith and obedience to the Lord.

Body: Abraham's Faith Tested by the Lord and Abraham's Obedience

1. The Lord who tests Abraham

Let's look at Genesis 22:1. "Some time later God tested Abraham." He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," Abraham replied.

In this verse, 'Some time later' refers to a time when Abraham found a stable life. Abraham is recognized by the people around him, and Isaac is growing well. The time had come for Abraham to live a stable life. At such times, the Lord calls Abraham. Abraham replied, "Here I am." Abraham is still awake. He is always ready to respond to the Lord's call.

By the way, the reason the Lord calls Abraham is to test him. Test is the process of recognizing a person's true heart. This is because man's sincerity is revealed in suffering. Also, the test is for God's people who must trust in the Lord only. The Lord's test against Abraham is to offer Abraham's son Isaac to the Lord as a burnt offering.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Genesis 22:2)

This test is too difficult for Abraham. **First, this test contradicts the Lord's promise to Abraham.** Isaac, whom the Lord says to sacrifice for Him, is the son of Abraham given to him through the promises and miracles of the Lord. But the Lord tells Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. **Second, the Lord does not explain to Abraham why it is necessary to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.** In fact, when the Lord first called Abraham, the purpose was to become a "source of blessing". But now, the reason why Isaac is offered as a burnt offering is unknown to Abraham. **Third, what will the people around Abraham say about Abraham?** Abraham loses his beloved child, and



his wife Sarah also loses the source of her joy. Furthermore, what would those who viewed Abraham's life and thought they were blessed by the Lord would think of Abraham?

For all these reasons, it is a difficult test for Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering for the Lord. However, the Lord tests how far Abraham obeyed and what he could endure. The Lord tests Abraham's absolute obedience and absolute faith for the Lord.

2. Abraham's obedience

Abraham responds to these commands of the Lord. **Let's look at Genesis 22:3. "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son, Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about."**

In fact, we don't know exactly what Abraham's heart is like. But he is not shaken and did things one by one in turn. He obeyed the Lord's commands immediately.

When Abraham and Isaac go to the place where they will sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, **"The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"(Genesis 22:7)** Abraham answered, **"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."(Genesis 22:8)**

This verse is both a statement of Abraham's faith and a prophecy about what will happen in the future. It is also the wish of Abraham.

Now the two of them arrived at a place where they must bind Isaac and offer him as a burnt offering. **Let's look at Genesis 22:9-10. "When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."**

This verse shows us the sacrifice is fully executed. But Isaac doesn't resist. It's too hard to understand. At this time, Isaac's age is at least 15 years old, and he could have pushed Abraham by force and could have shouted, but Isaac stayed still. He was like a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep before his shearers, is silent. He did not open his mouth.

Here we can recall the image of God the Father who gave his only begotten Son, Jesus, on the cross. Here, Abraham typifies the father who gives the only begotten Son, and Isaac typifies the obedient Jesus Christ on the cross. The story of Abraham offering Isaac as a burnt offering typifies for us the sacrifice of God the Father and Jesus.

But, the moment Abraham picks up the knife to kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, **"Abraham! Abraham!"** The angel said to Abraham, **"Do not lay a hand on the boy, do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."(Genesis 22:12)**

In this verse, **"now I know"** does not mean that the Lord now knows something about Abraham He did not previously know, but rather reveals what he knew about Abraham. In other words, it is time to reveal to the world that Abraham is the one who fears the Lord. It means that the Lord testifies Abraham's faith to the world.

The fear of the Lord is revealed to the world when we worship in spirit and in truth, and when we act according to the will of the Lord.

But there is something we must do to lift up the Lord. It is to give for the Lord what we love, care for, and depend on most, whether it is an only son, money, honor, time, or ourselves.



After all, the Lord's test of Abraham is a test of the fear of the Lord and a test of absolute obedience to the Lord. Obedience is the most important means of expressing '**the fear of Lord**', and faith is the power to overcome contradictions and conflicts for obedience. Even if we don't know the reason, even if there is a conflict between the Lord's promises and commands, we do not wander or stop in it, but rather let the conflict go over. Abraham showed the center of his mind to the Lord through the test.

The Lord prepares a ram for Abraham to be offered as a burnt offering on behalf of Isaac. **Genesis 22:13-14 says. "Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son."(v.13) "So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."(v. 14)**

And now people know that sacrifices as burnt offerings are prepared on the mountain of the LORD. On this mountain we are previewing, through the story of Abraham, Jesus, the Passover Lamb, who died for our sin.

Conclusion: Let us imitate absolute trust and obedience to the Lord.

Now let's summarize today's sermon. The Lord's children must be tested by the Lord. The Lord tests whether we can give up what we most cherish and value because we fear the Lord, whether we have absolute trust in the Lord, and whether we have faith that will overcome many incomprehensible situations.

Abraham passed this test well. **Hebrews 11:19 says, "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death."**

We may not be able to fully understand Abraham's heart for offering his beloved son Isaac. However, we can know his faith through the record in Bible. Through Abraham we see absolute trust and obedience to the Lord.

I hope all of us respond to any tests with obedience and faith, to become people of faith and the source of blessings in which the Lord approves and rejoices.

