

Lesson 38
Testings Within the Covenant

Genesis 22:1-23:20

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Being saved by grace through faith and under and in the Covenant, does not exempt a person from testings in his life. In fact, all of God's children are going to be tested at times. Tests to the believer's faith determine the genuineness of faith.

B. Life is a succession of tests, for character is only possible through discipline. In many lives there is some supreme test to which all others are secondary and preparatory as was the case in Abraham's life.

II. ABRAHAM TESTED THROUGH HIS SON 22:1-24

A. 22:1-2

1. "God did tempt (test) Abraham" to test the genuineness and the depth of his love for the one true God. This test came to Abraham because God wanted his heart (Prov. 23:26). NOTE. God does test believers (James 1:2-12; I Peter 1:6-7), but He never tempts them to evil (James 1:13-15).

2. This testing came "after these things", which refers to his whole previous life but specifically to the receiving of the promise in chapter 21. Abraham had his greatest victory because God had given him his promised son, Isaac. Perhaps Abraham thought with the coming of Isaac all trials and testings would end, but he failed to realize that his greatest testing was yet to come. NOTE. Sometimes when the believer has achieved a great victory, he is in line for severe testing.

3. Abraham was prepared for this testing because he was in fellowship with God. He said, "Here I am," indicating that he was ready to submit to the will of God for his life.

4. God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac on the altar as a human sacrifice. Isaac is Abraham's dearest possession in life and God asks him to sacrifice Isaac to God. God brought Abraham to the place where he was willing to go "all out" for God, God asks Abraham to make the supreme sacrifice and Abraham obeys. NOTE. God will often test the believer in the area of the person or thing he loves to find out whether the believer loves this person or thing more than Him.

B. 22:3-5

1. Abraham was obedient to God's word and made preparation for the sacrifice. It seems as though Abraham could hardly wait to see what the Lord was going to do, for he knew that Isaac was the son of promise and without him there would be no Covenant.

2. Abraham had absolute unquestioning faith in God and he told his two young servants to wait for he and Isaac would "go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham believed God would preserve Isaac to fulfill His word even if He had to resurrect Isaac from the dead to do it (Heb. 11:19). What fantastic trust Abraham had! There had never been such

an event as a resurrection, and so Abraham had no previous example to suggest this result or to encourage his faith thereby.

C. 22:6-8

1. Abraham and Isaac went alone to the place of sacrifice. Isaac was probably in his early thirties at this time (cf. 23:1 which states that Sarah was 127 years old when she died and she was 90 when Isaac was born). Isaac was no naive teenager and he began to wonder what was happening.

2. There was probably much silence between the two as they moved up the hill. Finally, Isaac asks the piercing question, "Father, where is the lamb for the offering?" While there is no record, the next few hours must have been some of the sweetest fellowship a father and son ever had as Abraham revealed to Isaac that God had commanded him to have Isaac sacrificed. But Abraham assured his son that God would provide a lamb. Abraham's faith was infectious and together Abraham and Isaac were totally trusting God to provide.

D. 22:9-14

1. Abraham built an altar and laid his son upon it. There is no record that Isaac in any way resisted his father. Why? He believed in God like his father. Unlike Ishmael, Isaac was a man of faith. His faith was demonstrated by his belief that God would fulfill His Covenant and by his submissiveness to his father Abraham.

2. Abraham meant business and he picked up the knife to slay his son. This man manifested such great obedience. Abraham must have had some mixed emotions, for he had loved his son for 30 years, but he knew that obedience was more important than his personal love ties.

3. At that last moment an angel of the Lord called out to Abraham, for God had intervened to stop the slaying. Abraham had proved his unwavering faith to Jehovah. NOTE. When Christians are under the testing of God, He often does not show us the solution or work out the problem until the last moment. God wants unfaltering faith.

4. Abraham looked up and he saw a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. God had provided an offering. NOTE. The solution to the problem was right near all the time and all Abraham had to do was trust God to provide.

5. Abraham called this place *Jehovahjireh*, that is, "The Lord will provide" or "The Lord shall see to it." NOTE: Every Christian must learn that in every spiritual, physical and emotional need the Lord will provide.

E. 22:15-24. The angel appears to Abraham a second time and reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant. The Covenant will be fulfilled "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (22:

18). Abraham demonstrated, proved and gave evidence that he was a true believer within the Covenant because he obeyed God. A truly saved person will demonstrate the reality of his faith (James 2:20-26).

III. ABRAHAM TESTED THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE 23:1-20

A. The death of Sarah was a blow to Abraham and Isaac. Abraham had lived with Sarah 60 years in Canaan and apart from the spat over Hagar they had a very solid marriage.

Sarah was 127 years old when she died. Sarah's death was also a blow to Isaac

(Gen. 24:67). This was also the death of a true believer and she had a

spiritual oneness with Abraham (Heb. 11:11-13; 1 Pet. 3:5-6).

B. Abraham mourned for Sarah and wept for her. He was grieved at the loss of a loved one, for when one loses a lifetime companion there is nothing that can fill the void except God Himself. These tears were neither unmanly nor morbid, but the genuine and rightful expression of Abraham's deep sorrow on the death of his wife.

C. Abraham kept himself busy so as not to be overcome with grief and sought to buy a proper burial place for Sarah and his descendants in the Promised Land. Abraham purchased a burial plot from the sons of Heth for 400 shekels.

D. Abraham had a genuine concern about the proper care of his wife's dead body, for he speaks of "my dead" (23:4), "his dead" (23:3) and "thy dead" (23:6). The body of his beloved wife was precious to him and was regarded by him and by others as his own property, of which he was about to take special and loving care. NOTE: This is the first recorded funeral in Scripture.