



When Abraham was tested by God in Genesis 22, he didn't know that what God was asking of him was a test.

What he did know... was that God had made repeated promises to him that he and Sarah would have a child through whom all peoples on earth would be blessed... and that after 25 long years that child of promise had been born.

But then... when Isaac had become a teenager, God asked him to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering??  
With this request Abraham was faced with a seeming contradiction in the character of God.

How could God ask Abraham to kill his son... and still bless all peoples through that dead son?  
It seemed as if God was of two minds.  
And if that was true, then was God truly trustworthy?

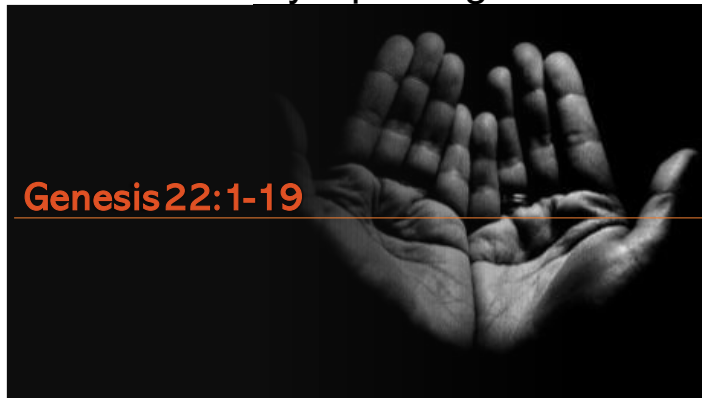
Here's the coffee question...

**03:00**

Coffee/Question

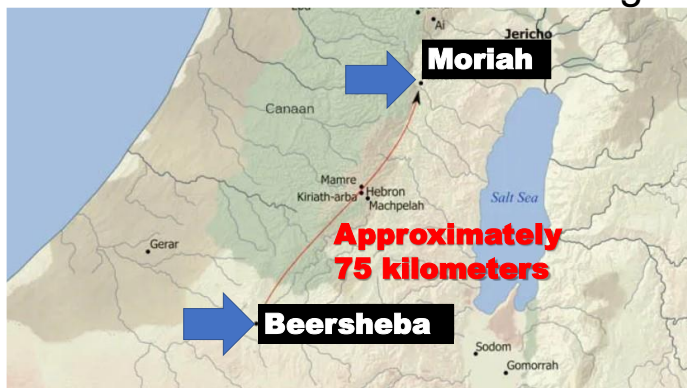
How do you respond to God when his command seems to “contradict” either who he is or what he has promised?

Let’s read today’s passage.



Abraham’s response to what God asked of him... was quick.  
 v.3 – “early the next morning.”  
 v.3b – for the journey, along with food and water, Abraham took wood, fire and a knife.

God had told Abraham where to go... to the region of Moriah...



From Beersheba where he was living... to Moriah ... was a journey of three days.

v.4 - on the third day, Abraham saw where God had said to go.

v.5 - he stopped and gave instructions to the two servants who accompanied him and Isaac:

**“Stay here.”**

**“We will worship and then come back to you.”**

Remember... only Abraham knew what God had asked of him. So, was Abraham lying when he said, “we” will come back to you?



Abraham did not know... how... God would work out his will, he just trusted that God would.

v.6 - after the wood had been placed on Isaac to carry, and Abraham took in his hands the fire and the knife... and set out for the place God had indicated to him, Isaac dared to ask a question that had been niggling in his mind.



Abraham believed that God would resolve the tension between what he had promised him and what he had commanded of him. Again, I ask, was Abraham lying in his response to Isaac?

He answered Isaac... v.8....



It's one thing to say, "God himself will provide."  
The testimony of Scripture... and the evidence we see with our own eyes... is that God sustains his creation, his creatures and humanity.

Jesus spoke of this in one of his teachings we call the Sermon on the Mount.

But what Abraham said in his answer to Isaac went beyond incredible.

You could even say it was shocking.

In that day and time, the peoples of the earth made sacrifices to their gods in order to appease them or to persuade them to do something for them.

And this is how it worked...

**The greater the ask,  
the more costly the sacrifice.**

The Scripture teaches us, in both the Old and New Testaments...  
that the gods of the nations are not harmless.  
They are in fact, malevolent, not benevolent.

The triune God said this to the church at Corinth:

**1 Corinthians 10:20**  
**The sacrifices of pagans**  
**are offered to demons,**  
**not to God,**  
**and I do not want you**  
**to be participants with demons.**

The gods of the nations are fallen angels, who have corrupted themselves and are now known as demons.  
With the powers they have, they lie, manipulate and deceive in order to elicit worship from human beings whom they have enslaved to carry out their will – which is to ruin God’s creation and creatures.

Abraham’s answer to Isaac was shocking, because he said...  
God himself would provide the lamb for the sacrifice.

We see in this statement the story of rescue.  
It is not a story of what humanity has to do in order to be saved,  
but the story of what God has done to save us.

Abraham’s answer satisfied Isaac.  
We know this because of v.8b – “And the two of them went on together.”

Where was Abraham headed?  
To the place... which God had told him about.  
The place mattered.

Do you know why?



Because... in the future, another sacrifice would be made there, a sacrifice that Abraham's foreshadowed.

None of what Abraham did that day was done lightly. In fact, it would be easy to miss this detail, which Allen Ross identifies, that on that day, Abraham sacrificed...

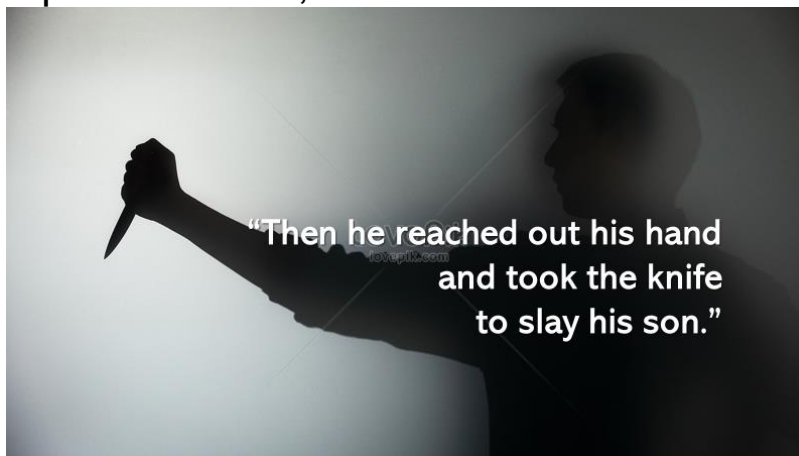
**"his own will and his own wisdom in regard to Isaac."** p.393.

Once there, Abraham didn't dawdle... v.9.

He didn't look around for a substitute.

He didn't even ask "are you sure about this?"

He built the altar; arranged the wood; bound and placed Isaac on top of the wood; and...



Only when his hand was in the air, did the angel of the LORD stop him.

v.11 - the angel of the LORD called out, "Abraham!" "Abraham!"  
And as had become his practice, Abraham immediately answered, "Here I am."

The instruction from God was clear – "Do not proceed."  
Why was Abraham not to proceed?  
Because... look at the explanation given in v.12:  
**"Now I know..."**

There are many instances in the Scriptures where people have an experience with God and then say of God... now I know.

Exodus 18:9-11

Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. **Now I know** that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly."

Psalms 20:6-8

**Now this I know:**

The Lord gives victory to his anointed.  
He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of his right hand.  
Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.  
They are brought to their knees and fall,  
but we rise up and stand firm.

But here in Genesis 22 it is God who is saying, "Now I know."  
But doesn't God know everything?  
Doesn't he direct all things?

Here in this chapter, we see a beautiful picture of mystery and wisdom and joy.

God delighted to see the obedience of Abraham, not just expressed verbally, but expressed in action.

Abraham chose to obey God because he rightly feared God. Abraham had a profound reverence for God that loved God with all of his heart, soul and mind... even more than he loved his son.

Abraham had passed the test.

This is why the angel of the LORD stopped him.

And at that very moment, look at v.13, Abraham looked up and saw God's provision.



He saw a ram, which is a male sheep, caught in a thicket. Remember he had told Isaac – “God will provide a lamb.” The ram was given in sacrifice instead of Isaac.

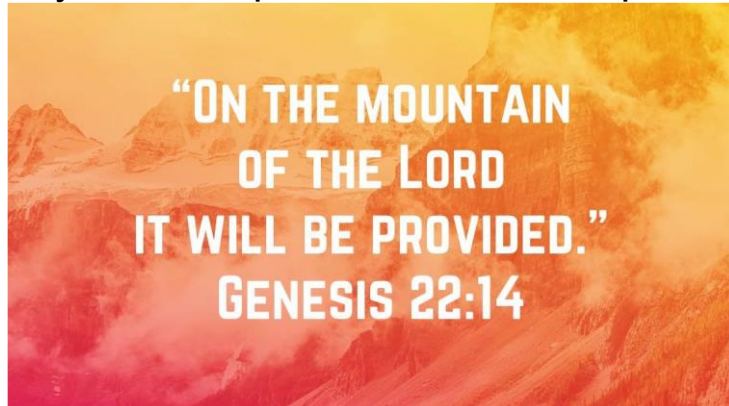
In God's great story of rescue... this long-ago day on Mt. Moriah was a watershed moment.

The name which was revealed to Abraham indicated this –

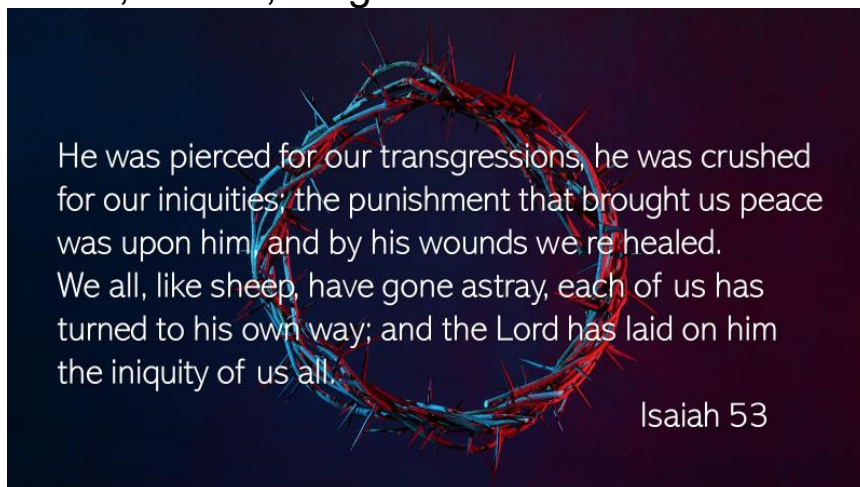




There also developed a saying that testified to how significant that day and that place was in redemptive history –



This saying was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus, when, almost 2000 years later, on Mt. Moriah, he was nailed to a Roman cross. There, in love, he gave his life as a substitute for humanity.



Jesus is God's greatest provision.

For some of you the takeaway truth is this. God himself provided for your salvation. What you could not do, what you could never do... God has done for you in Jesus Christ... because he knows you... and loves you.

Jesus didn't come into the world to make bad people good. He came to make spiritually dead people alive.

All of us are born spiritually dead.  
It is nothing we have done.  
It is the human condition.

The very parents who give to us physical life, pass on to us spiritual death, as it was passed on to them.

But God in mercy provided rescue for us.  
God's Rescuer, Jesus Christ, died the death we deserve.  
But how does that long ago sacrifice of Jesus change our lives?

This is our condition.

**2 Corinthians 4:4, 6**

**The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

**God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

All of us enter life spiritually dead.  
The god of this age, Satan, and the fallen angels who are aligned with him, cruelly and maliciously, through varying means... blind all people to the beauty of Jesus Christ, the Rescuer.

But do you see what God in mercy does?  
He intervenes a second time... for the purpose of saving.

When God first created light, he did so by speaking.  
And as he did then, so he does now – he speaks and his light shines into a human heart, that has been darkened by sin, and illuminates it, revealing to a blinded and spiritually dead person, the beautiful Savior who offers them life.

Through God's Rescuer, Jesus, life from heaven is given to all who turn their lives towards God and who believe in Jesus, receiving him into their lives to be the One in charge.

If you have not yet come home to God, my desire and prayer for each of you, is that God would reveal to your heart the glory of his person in the face of Jesus.

And that, when he shines truth into your heart, you will turn from your sin and turn to Jesus, trusting in him to save you.

For those of you who follow Jesus the primary takeaway truth in this passage is the revealing of the One we hope in – the God who himself provides the lamb.

God will test your obedience as he did Abraham's. It is not a question of whether or not he will, but when. When he asks something of us that seems impossible, or doesn't make sense to us... will we trust the triune God?

Is he enough for everything and in everything?  
Is his grace truly sufficient?

The NIV study notes say this:

**"Abraham had committed himself by covenant to be obedient to the LORD and had consecrated his son Isaac to the LORD by circumcision.**

**Here, in Genesis 22, the LORD put his servant's faith and loyalty to the supreme test, thereby instructing Abraham, Isaac and their descendants as to the kind of total consecration the LORD's covenant requires."**

We earlier sang of the LORD's faithfulness.

Do you see from the passage that God greatly desires you and I to be faithful to him... in every moment of every day in every situation?

God calls us into a love relationship with himself where we love him with all of our heart, soul and strength?

Where we lay down, where we give up...anything that would compete for or divide our love for him.

This is what the test for Abraham was about.

Who did he love supremely... the gift... or the Giver of the gift? Jesus in his teaching spoke often of treasuring God above all other things or persons.

Our love for God is demonstrated by our obedience of God. In this regard, love of God is not simply an emotion, but an act of the will that chooses him.

God categorically refuses to be one of many gods in a person's life.

He demands first place.

He insists that he alone, be the treasure of our heart.

If someone wasn't prepared to do this, Jesus' counsel to them was - come back when you are.

How many times did Jesus tell people to count the cost?

Follower of Jesus, we don't just count the cost when we begin to follow Jesus.

We count the cost every day thereafter.

To those who don't love God this may excessive.

But to those who have entered into this great love, to those who are committed wholeheartedly to God because he is wholeheartedly committed to them... there is great freedom and joy, as well as security and assurance.

Look at what God said to Abraham in v.16-18.

God didn't just tolerate Abraham.... he delighted in him.

The Father said something similar to Jesus at his baptism.  
**“This is my Son in whom I am well pleased.”**

Do you realize... the Father delights in all who love and obey him. Look at what God said through the prophet Isaiah, in 62:5.



God delights in his followers who obey him... like a husband rejoices over and delights in his wife on their wedding day.

God said something similar through the prophet Zephaniah 3:17.



God sings songs of joy over his obedient followers.  
He delights in their fellowship.  
His steadfast love envelopes and quiets their hearts.

While God desires that our obedience be radical, never forget that his love for you and me is also radical, as is his faithfulness, for even when we are faithless, he remains faithful.

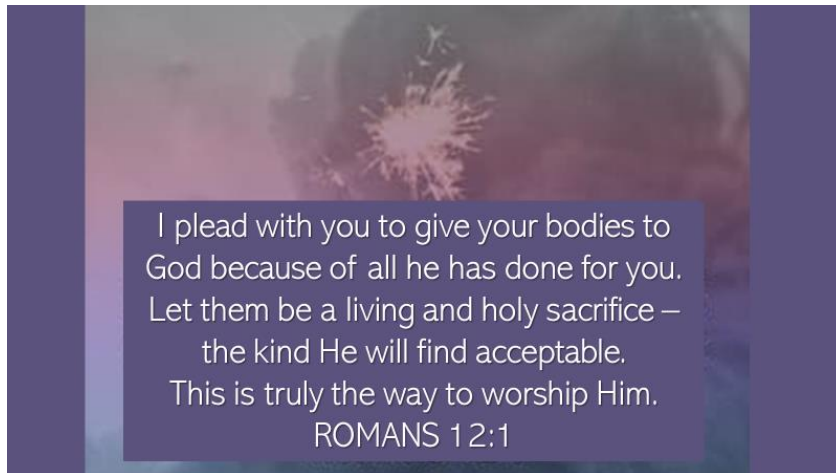
How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called sons and daughters of God!

We love him because he first loved us.

What specifically might God ask us to sacrifice to him as an act of obedience?

The NT identifies the following three things, though there are many others.

1. God will ask you to present your body to him as a living sacrifice.



What does this mean?

God commands his followers to use their bodies as he says, in a time when the prevailing mindset of our culture is that a person's body is theirs to do with as they please.

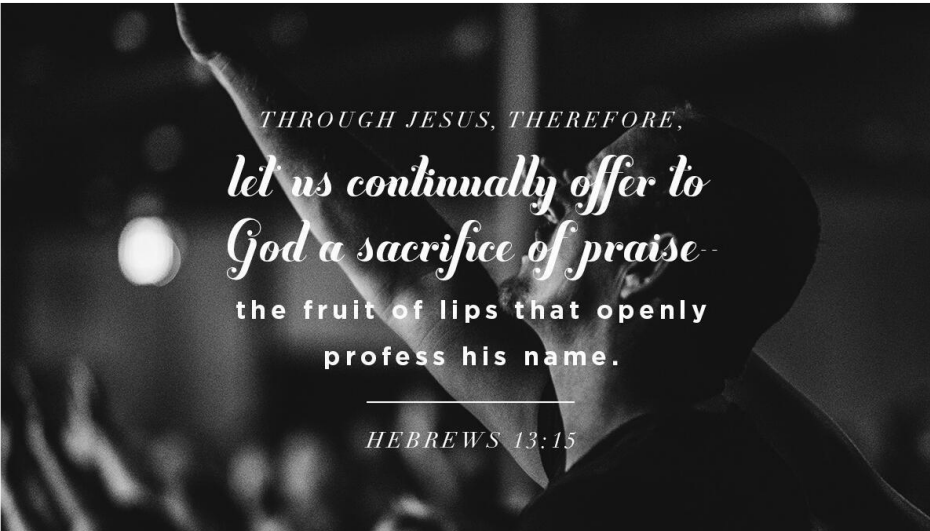
God insists we are not our own.

He says we belong to him – body, soul and spirit.

We can count on it – the LORD will be active in building this truth into the core of our being by putting before us opportunities, where we are faced with a choice, whether or not we will obey him in matters pertaining to our body.

And when we do, we experience his delight in us.

2. The Lord will ask you to obey him by offering your praise of him as a sacrifice to him.



Do you see it here – the praise being described is not just the songs we sing, but the words we speak that openly profess our allegiance to Jesus.

The word... continually... is important.

We are commanded to constantly profess God's name, by speaking at every opportunity of his beauty and worthiness.

To obey the LORD requires us to choose to keep him constantly in our minds and to actively engage with him in our day to day lives, so that speaking of him is not something foreign, but is a part of who we are.

And when we do, we experience his delight in us.

3. God would have his people, as Acts 10:38 says, go about as Jesus did, doing good and healing all who are under the power of the devil, because God is with them as he was with Jesus.

This is his command to us.





In choosing to obey the LORD in this matter, he gives to us opportunity to be like him.

And when we are, we experience his delight in us.

Lord, we have interacted with your word.

We ask your Spirit to now apply it to our lives.

- Where would you have us say yes to you?
- Where do we need to make confession of sin?
- Where is there a promise that we need to grab hold of and hold on to?
- Do we need to experience your delight in us?

Speak Lord, we are listening.

Amen.