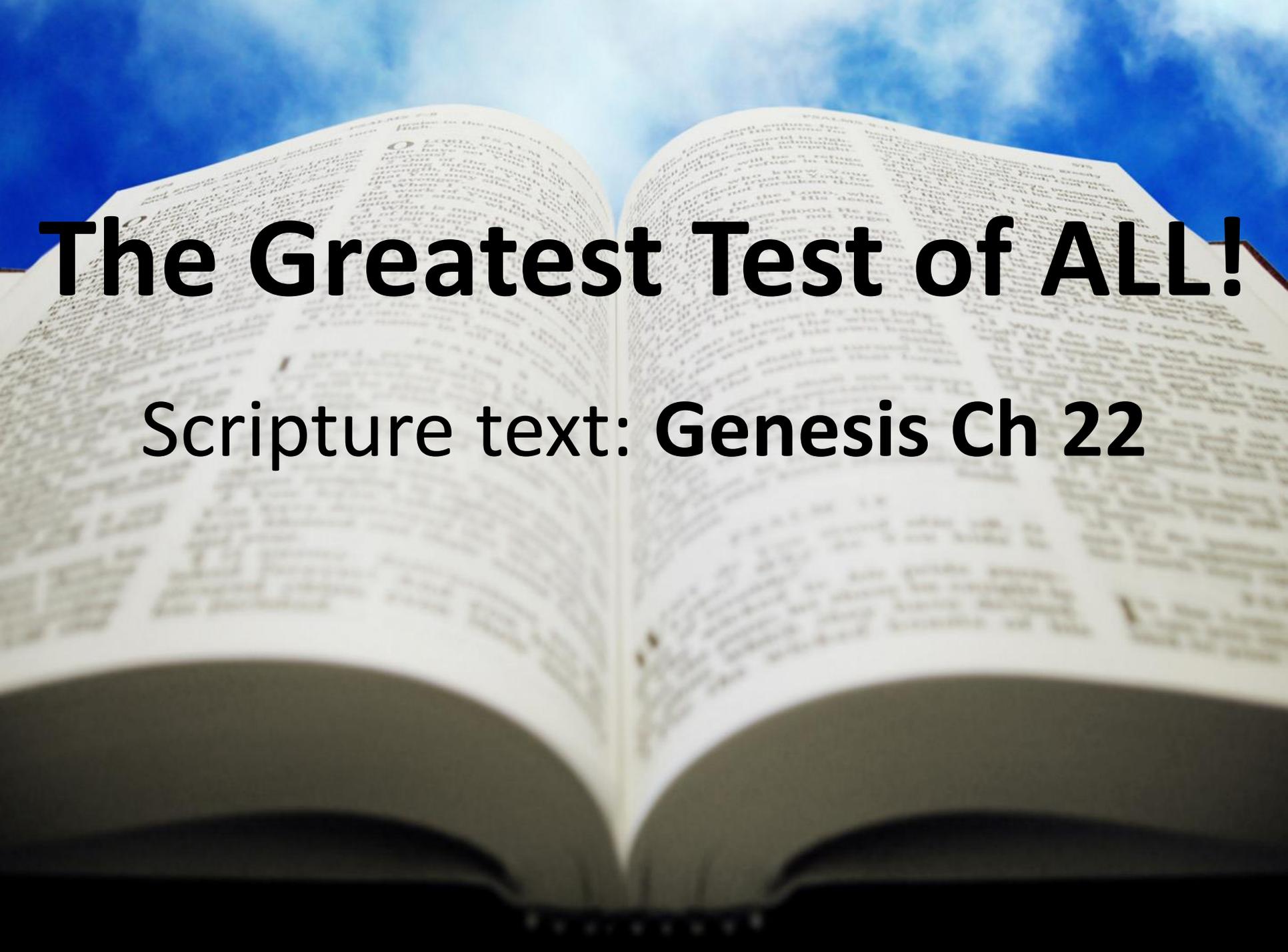


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The Greatest Test of ALL!

Scripture text: **Genesis Ch 22**

Genesis 22:1-2 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take 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."

Genesis 22 **records the greatest test that Abraham ever faced.** True, it also presents a beautiful picture of our Lord's sacrifice at Calvary; but **the main lesson is obedient faith that overcomes in the trials of life.** Abraham teaches us **how to face and handle the tests of life to the glory of God.** Consider five simple instructions.

1. Expect tests from God (Gen. 22:1–2)

In the “**School of Faith**” we must have **occasional tests, or we will never know where we are spiritually.** Abraham had his share of tests right from the beginning. First was the “**family test,**” when he had to leave his loved ones and step out by faith to go to a new land (11:27–12:5). This was followed by the “**famine test,**” which Abraham failed because he doubted God and went down to Egypt for help (12:10–13:4).

Once back in the land, Abraham passed the “**fellowship test**” when he gave Lot first choice in using the pastureland (13:5–18). He also passed the “**fight test**” when he defeated the kings (14:1–16) and the “**fortune test**” when he said no to Sodom’s wealth (14:17–24). But he failed the “**fatherhood test**” when Sarah got impatient with God and suggested that Abraham have a child by Hagar (Gen. 16). When the time came to send Ishmael away, Abraham passed the “**farewell test**” even though **it broke his heart** (21:14–21).

Not every difficult experience in life is necessarily a personal test from God. (Of course, any experience could become a test or a temptation, depending on how we deal with it. See James 1:12–16.) Sometimes our own disobedience causes the pain or disappointment, as when Abraham went to Egypt (Gen. 12:10ff) and to Gerar (Gen. 20). Sometimes our hurts are simply a part of normal human life: As we grow older, friends and loved ones relocate or even die, life changes around us, and we must make painful adjustments.

James 1:12-16 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But **each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.** Then *desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin*, and **sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.** **Do not be deceived,** my beloved brothers.

Learn to distinguish between trials and temptations. Temptations come from our desires within us (James 1:12–16) while trials come from the Lord who has a special purpose to fulfill. **Temptations are used by the devil to bring out the worst in us, but trials are used by the Holy Spirit to bring out the best in us (1:1–6).**

Temptations seem logical while trials seem very unreasonable. Why would God give Abraham a son and then ask Abraham to kill him?

James 1:2-6 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

All believers face similar temptations to sin (1 Cor. 10:13), but not all believers experience the same trials of faith. God's testings are tailor-made for each child of God, and each experience is unique. God never asked Lot to face the tests that Abraham faced. Why? Because Lot was being tempted by the world and the flesh and never grew to the place of maturity that Abraham reached. In one sense, it is a compliment when God sends us a test; it shows God wants to "promote us" in the "School of Faith." God never sends a test until He knows you are ready for it.

“Life is difficult,” wrote psychiatrist M. Scott Peck. **“Once we truly know that life is difficult—once we truly understand and accept it—then life is no longer difficult”** (The Road Less Traveled, p. 15). That is the first lesson we must learn: **Expect trials from God**, because the Christian life is not easy.

Gen 22:1-2 After these things **God tested Abraham** and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "**Take 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."

2. Focus on promises, not explanations.

Genesis 22:3-5 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. **On the third day Abraham** lifted up his eyes and **saw the place from afar**. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; **I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.**"

“In the commencement of the spiritual life,” wrote French mystic Madame Guyon, “**our hardest task is to bear with our neighbor**; in its progress, with ourselves; and in its end, with God.” **Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible**. Whether you look at Joseph in prison, Moses and Israel at the Red Sea, David in the cave, or Jesus at Calvary, the lesson is the same: **We live by promises, not by explanations.**

Consider how unreasonable God's request was. Isaac was Abraham's only son, and the future of the covenant rested in him. Isaac was a miracle child, the gift of God to Abraham and Sarah in response to their faith. Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac very much and had built their whole future around him. When God asked Abraham to offer his son, **He was testing Abraham's faith, hope, and love; and it looked like God was wiping out everything Abraham and Sarah had lived for.**

When God sends a trial to us, our first response is usually, “Why, Lord?” and then, “Why me?”

Right away, we want God to give us explanations. Of course, we know that God has reasons for sending tests—perhaps to purify our faith (1 Peter 1:6–9), or perfect our character (James 1:1–4), or even to protect us from sin (2 Cor. 12:7–10)—but we fail to see how these things apply to us. The fact that we ask our Father for explanations suggests that we may not know ourselves as we should or God as we should.

1 Peter 1:6-9 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. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, **obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a **messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.** Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, **I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Abraham heard God's word and immediately obeyed it by faith. He knew that God's will never contradicts God's promise, so he held on to the promise **“in Isaac shall thy seed be called”** (Gen. 21:12). Abraham believed that even if God allowed him to slay his son, He could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17–19).

Faith does not demand explanations; faith rests on promises.

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, **when he was tested**, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "**Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.**" He considered that **God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.**

Abraham told the two servants, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Gen. 22:5). **Because he believed God, Abraham had no intentions of bringing back a corpse!** It has been pointed out that **Abraham believed God and obeyed Him** when he did not know where (Heb. 11:8), when he did not know when (11:9–10, 13–16), when he did not know how (11:11–12), and when he did not know why (11:17–19).

Open your Bibles to Hebrews 11