

HEROES OF THE FAITH

Intro to Heb. 11:17-19; Gen. 22:1-19

Sunday, August 13, 2017
Pastor Doug Phillips

Scholars have argued that the Bible “favors one central preoccupation: a man’s decision in relationship to God.” The test of Abraham is the decisive moment in Abraham’s relationship to God. As already pointed out in Hebrews 11 (vv. 8-16), this involved a radical trust in the promises of God, even though the promises weren’t fulfilled in Abraham’s earthly lifetime. Here, in this section, Abraham’s faith will require him to exercise a radical obedience to the commands of God.

While we will never be commanded by God to sacrifice our children, we must be preoccupied with the same relationship to God as Abraham was. Our faith must be tested in order to prove its genuineness—not to God, but to us. This testing can be as simple as attending church each week to know that we care about hearing God’s word in order to obey it. It can also mean sacrificing some things in our lives which we may hold dearly, but which also prohibit us from having a robust, faithful relationship to God.

Context

Genesis 22 comes near the end of the section on Abraham (11:27-25:11). At the beginning of that section (12:1-3), Abraham is told to go from his country and his father’s house. That exact Hebrew command, “go,” is only repeated in Genesis 22, near the end of the story, thus encapsulating Abraham’s faithful obedience. Abraham left his father and mother and way of life as a demonstration of his devotion to God. Likewise, he proved that he was willing to leave his son as well to be completely devoted to God. That faithful, obedient devotion is what marks Abraham as an example of faith for all generations (Rom. 4; Gal. 3; James 2).

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

“When God Tested Abraham”

Read Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22:1-19

Key Ideas

- 1) When faith in God is real, it leads to a radical, hold-nothing-back obedience to His will (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 28:19)

- 2) The writer of Hebrews is encouraging the church to remain faithful though it will cost them something

- 3) God tests our hearts so that we will know whether or not we are truly living faithfully (Gen. 22:12; Deut. 8:2)

- 4) God’s will does not consist in working religious activities into our schedules

- 5) God’s will does mean:
 - a. Doing as much good as we can in the name of Jesus

 - b. Making disciples by proclaiming the word of God to others.

Discuss

- 1) A faithful response to God's word includes many different responses including: trusting promises, obeying commands, heeding warnings, and rejoicing in blessings. Which of these responses is most difficult for you? Which is the easiest?

- 2) Warren Wiersbe once said, "a faith that can't be tested can't be trusted." What does that mean?

- 3) How has your faith been tested? What has that revealed to you?

- 4) Read Deuteronomy 8:1-9. How does God explain what happened to the Israelites in the wilderness? How should we understand the trials that we go through in light of this passage?

- 5) The two main aspects of the will of God that Pastor Doug pointed out were: 1) doing as much good as possible in Jesus' name; 2) making disciples through the proclamation of the word of God. Which of these comes most naturally to you? How do you plan to be more intentional about doing the other?