

## GENESIS 22:1-2, 6-13 THE ULTIMATE TEST

<sup>1</sup> Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

<sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, <sup>7</sup> Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

<sup>8</sup> Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

<sup>12</sup> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "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." <sup>13</sup> 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.

Jesus made the statement: "*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it*" (Matthew 10:39). The promise of the New Covenant is that of life; eternal life. Like our father-in-faith, Abraham, we are called by God to give up the very thing that God has promised; that for which we hope. How can this be?

It is a test of where our faith truly lies. Do we love God or do we, like the sons of Zebedee (Mark 10:37), love the idea of being closely associated with the seat of ultimate power? Do we love God or do we, like Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:19), love the idea of receiving notoriety? Do we love God, or do we, like the disciples who no longer could follow Jesus (John 6:60), love the promise more?

Especially as members of a consumer culture that is thoroughly pickled in incentives, the ultimate test of our faith is whether we are willing to give up even the rewards of following Jesus in obedience to Jesus. God is not interested in bribing us into obedience, like so many unruly children.. God desires us first and foremost to love him, and him only. The true test for each of us then is the question, "Could you follow Jesus without the promise of eternal life?"

**I beseech you God to give me the faith of Abraham when he was willing to sacrifice the very promise for which he had waited so long, and which you had given him. I repent of my consumer attitude as another manifestation of my self-centeredness. Let the joy of salvation be due to my eternal relationship with you and not the eternal reward from you. Amen.**