

# ABRAHAM SACRIFICED ISAAC: SUPREME, SACRIFICIAL FAITH – THE STEPS TO ABSOLUTE SURRENDER GENESIS 22:01–24

## *Introduction False Religions, Human Sacrifice*

This is a strange and shocking passage of Scripture. Why would God tell Abraham to sacrifice his own son as an offering to God? There are at least four reasons.

1. God wanted to show — forever picture — that human sacrifice is wrong. When God stopped Abraham in mid-air from sacrificing Isaac, God demonstrated and showed man forever that human sacrifice is wrong. And people are guilty of human sacrifice. Shockingly, even today, in the dark corners of our communities and earth, devil worshippers and heathen religions sacrifice human beings. We hear too often of such shocking disregard for human life. In Abraham's day, some of the Canaanite religions sacrificed to their idol god, Molech (see Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; 2 Kng 3:27). Human sacrifice has continued to be practiced by depraved man down through history.

This savage, depraved sacrifice of human life is not God's will, and God has always wanted it stopped. How, then, could God best convey this message to man? By a commandment? Yes, but commandments are words; and people forget and ignore words far, far too often. Thus, God gave man far more than just a commandment; God demonstrated and pictured His will for man. When God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice and then *stopped* Abraham, God pictured His will for man.

=> God declared that human sacrifice is not the way to approach and please God, that human sacrifice is unacceptable to God. Why? Because God is perfect; thus, any life sacrificed to God has to be perfect. Consequently, human sacrifice is bound to be unacceptable to God, for human sacrifice is no greater, no more perfect, than the human being who is being offered. And no human being is perfect. To say so is foolish and ignorant.

=> God declared that what is needed is a pure and perfect life that can be offered as a sacrifice *for* man.

2. God wanted to show — forever picture — that the sacrifice He wants is a spiritual and living sacrifice. God's concern is the spiritual sacrifice of man's body, not a human sacrifice. God wants man to offer his body as a living sacrifice. God does not want people offering their children and beautiful women to God by laying them upon altars and killing them. God wants people offering themselves and their children and beautiful women as living sacrifices to Him.

**Rom 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

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3. God wanted to show — forever picture — the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, the sacrifice of God’s very own Son for the sins of the world. There are many similarities between the offering of Abraham’s son, Isaac, and the offering of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The similarities will be covered below. (See note, pt. 3, Thought 1, Gen 22:11-14.)
4. God wanted to show — forever picture — that He does test people; He tests them to show the world that some persons do fear God. By *fear* is meant reverence, love, awe and true worship — all that true religion is. This was the very reason God gave for testing Abraham: verse one says that God tested Abraham and verse twelve tells why God tested him, to show that Abraham feared (reverenced, loved) God above all else, even above his very own son. This fact is discussed in more detail below (see note, Gen 22:1-2).

Now, to the passage. This is one of the great passages of Scripture, a passage showing that a person can love God supremely, so supremely that he will sacrifice anything for God. This is a Scripture that covers the great subject of absolute surrender, how a person can be totally — even absolutely — surrendered to God. The steps to absolute surrender are clearly seen in Abraham’s experience. This is the subject of this great passage: *Abraham Sacrificed Isaac: Supreme, Sacrificial Faith — the Steps to Absolute Surrender*, Genesis 22:1-24.

- I. Step 1: facing God’s demand for absolute sacrifice, His highest demand (vv. 1-2).
- II. Step 2: thinking through the sacrifice (vv. 3-4).
- III. Step 3: trusting God and His power to raise up and use the sacrifice (vv. 5-8).
- IV. Step 4: following through with the sacrifice (vv. 9-10).
- V. Step 5: experiencing God’s acceptance and provision (vv. 11-14).
- VI. Step 6: having God’s promises renewed to one’s heart (vv. 15-18).
- VII. Conclusion: receiving good news (vv. 19-24).

(Please note: a person may wish to divide this passage into two or three messages or lessons. If so, the following is suggested:

- => Part 1 could cover just point 1 of the outline, vv. 1-2.
- => Part 2 could cover points 2-4 of the outline, vv. 3-10.
- => Part 3 could cover points 5-6, vv. 11-24.

Of course, other divisions are possible, as well as the teaching of the passage as a whole. May our wonderful Lord help us share with power the great truths pictured so graphically in this most startling passage.)

## I. *Genesis 22:01–02 Facing God’s Demand for Absolute Sacrifice*

Step one to absolute surrender is facing God’s demand for absolute sacrifice, His supreme highest demand.

1. God tested Abraham, put him in a severe crisis. Remember, this was not the only major test or crisis Abraham had to face (see *Testing, Crises*, Gen 22:1-2). J. Vernon McGee says this:

*This is a real crisis in Abraham’s life. God has brought this man through four very definite crises, each of which was a real exercise of his soul, a real strain upon his heart.*

- => *First of all, he was called to leave all of his relatives in Ur of the Chaldees. He was just to leave the whole group. That was a real test for Abraham. He didn’t do it very well at the beginning, but, nevertheless, the break finally came.*
- => *Then there was the test that came with Lot, his nephew. Abraham loved Lot — he wouldn’t have been carrying Lot around with him if he hadn’t. But the time came when they had to separate, and Lot went down to Sodom.*
- => *Then there was the test with this boy of his, the son of Hagar, Ishmael. Abraham just cried out to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!” He loved that boy; he hated to be separated from him.*
- => *Now Abraham comes to this supreme test, the fourth great crisis in his life: he is asked to give up Isaac. Abraham does not quite understand all the details for the very simple reason that God has told him, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’ Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (see Heb 11:19), but as far as Abraham is concerned, he is willing to go through with the sacrifice. (J. Vernon McGee. *Thru the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 92).*

2. God asked Abraham to do a most difficult thing: to offer his son as a sacrifice to God, the son whom he loved ever so dearly. Note how God stressed Abraham’s love for his son: take your son, *whom you love*, and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham was given Isaac in his old age (Gen 21:2, 5). He had been hoping for the promised son for decades, and he had all his dreams wrapped up in him. Why would God demand such a thing from Abraham?

Very simply, God was putting Abraham to the supreme test of life, the absolute sacrifice and surrender of himself to God. Step by step God led him to the point of absolute surrender. How?

- a. God led Abraham to absolute surrender by taking the most precious thing in his life and leading him to surrender that thing as an offering, as a sacrifice to God. It was Abraham’s heart, his willingness, his spiritual surrender that God was after, not Isaac’s life. (See the passages forbidding human sacrifice, Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; Deu 12:31; 18:10.)

- b. God led Abraham to absolute surrender by testing him within his environment. God always has to use the language and the things of a man's environment if He wishes His message to be communicated and understood. In Abraham's day the sacrifice of human beings was the supreme act of worship by some heathen religions, for example Canaanite religions. A worshipper who offered his own flesh and blood was thought to be offering the supreme sacrifice. He was proving that he loved his god supremely, above all else.

When God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham knew exactly what God was saying to him. He was to make the supreme sacrifice, prove that he loved the only true and living God above all else. Abraham knew that God was after the absolute surrender of his heart, his will, his spirit. Verse five compared with Heb 11:19 shows this (see note below, Gen 22:5-8).

**Thought 1.** God did not test Abraham that Abraham might prove himself to God. God knew Abraham's heart. God knows all things. But Abraham needed to know his own heart, and all future believers needed a picture of what absolute surrender to God means, a testimony that man can love God supremely. Man can make an absolute surrender and sacrifice of himself to God (all he is and has), and God can take care of him, no matter what may confront him. Thus the testing of Abraham took place in order *to show* and teach several things to both Abraham and succeeding generations.

- (1) Abraham demonstrated that a person can know God personally. A person can actually have a personal relationship with God. This is shown by the name used for God (Ha 'Elohim) (v. 1). The Hebrew name here stresses the personal, true God. It was the personal, true God (Ha 'Elohim) who spoke to Abraham, not just God (Elohim, the general name used for God). (H. C. Leupold. *Genesis*, Vol. 2, p. 619).

**Rev 3:20** *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

**John 1:12** *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

- (2) Abraham demonstrated that a person can love God supremely. A person can love God before all else, even before his son or daughter (Gen 22:2, 10). (See outline and notes, Mt. 10:35-37.)

**Mat 10:37** *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”*

**Mat 22:37-38** *Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*

- (3) Abraham demonstrated that a person can glorify God above all else. A person can glorify God by obeying God's Word just as it is given, no matter the cost (Gen 22:2, 10).

**Mat 7:21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

**John 14:21** *Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.*”

**John. 15:10** “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

**1 John 2:5** *But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him.*

**1 Sam 15:22** *But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

(4) Abraham demonstrated that a person can reach an unusual height of spiritual maturity, a maturity that stands out as a great testimony for God (Gen 22:2, 5, 7-8, 10-11, 13-14).

**Mat 5:16** “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

**Mat 5:48** “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

**Luke 9:23** *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

**Acts 1:8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

**Acts 22:14-15** *Then he said: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you [Paul], to know his will, and see the Righteous One, and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.’*

**Isa 43:10** “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”

(5) Abraham demonstrated that a person can be completely surrendered to God. A person can give back to God the greatest gift of all, the very gift that God had given the person in the first place, his body and his life (Gen 22:1-2, 9-10). A person can make the absolute sacrifice of himself to God (Gen 22:1f).

**Rom 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**1 Cor 6:19-20** *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

(6) Abraham demonstrated that a person's faith can be victorious over all, no matter the trial (Gen 22:1f).

*2 Cor 2:14* But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

*1 John 5:4-5* For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

(7) Abraham demonstrated that a person can put God first, before all else, no matter the cost (Gen 22:1-2, 9-10).

*Mat 6:33* "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

*Mat 20:27* "And whoever wants to be first must be your slave."

*Luke 5:27* After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him.

## II. *Genesis 22:03–04 Thinking Through the Sacrifice*

Step two to absolute surrender is thinking through the sacrifice. God's instructions had pierced Abraham's heart, cut him to the core. He was hurting within, suffering the most severe pain imaginable. His thoughts were bound to be bouncing around wondering, questioning:

=> How could God tell me to offer my son as a sacrifice?

=> Is this not against God's law that forbids murder (Gen 9:5-6)?

=> How can I sacrifice my own son, the son of my heart and of my life? Would I not rather die myself than him?

=> Why would God want such a thing? Why, O God, why?

=> What about the promise? God, you promised and gave Your Word that Isaac was *the promised son*, that he was to be the father of nations, that through his descendants the promised seed would come, the Saviour of the World? If I sacrifice Isaac, how can all this happen? How can you fulfil your promise?

=> How can I ever face Sarah again, or for that matter, face anyone?

=> And what about my testimony before the world? What are the unbelievers going to think — all those who know me, all the Canaanites, Egyptians, Philistines and others? What kind of testimony will this be to them?

=> God, sacrificing Isaac *does not match* your promise. I cannot reconcile all this in my mind. How can you fulfil your promise if I do this thing? How could you ask me to sacrifice Isaac? What do you mean? What are you after? What are you doing?

On and on, the rampaging thoughts and questions must have flooded Abraham's mind. But note: his questions — his inability to resolve the problem — did not keep Abraham from obeying God. Abraham obeyed God. He did not understand; nevertheless, he set about doing exactly what God had told him to do.

This fact is of extreme importance: while Abraham was thinking through the sacrifice, he was obeying God, and while he was obeying God, he was thinking through the sacrifice. Not understanding the problem did not keep Abraham from obeying God. Abraham was committed to obeying God whether he understood the problem or not. Note that Abraham arose early to begin making preparations. He himself saddled the donkey and cut the wood. He had hundreds of workers, but he did it all himself. Why? He probably did what many of us do when we face problems: sought solitude in physical work while he thought through the sacrifice and problem. Note also that the journey to Moriah took three days. Abraham had three days to think through the sacrifice. Imagine! Three days to either rationalize his way out of the sacrifice or to more deeply surrender himself to God's command.

**Thought 1.** The sacrifice of our lives to God — making an absolute surrender — demands thought, the deepest and most serious thought possible. Any person who hears God's call to absolute surrender — to sacrifice his life totally to God — must know what he is doing. He must think through God's call, just what it means to totally sacrifice his life to God; what it means to give up his life, to make an absolute surrender to God.

**Luke 9:23** *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

**1 Tim 4:15** *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

**Psa 19:14** *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

**Deu 32:29** *If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be.*

**1 Sam 12:24** *But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.*

**Job 37:14** *"Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders."*

### **III. Genesis 22:05–08 Trusting God and His Power to Use the Sacrifice**

Step three to absolute surrender is trusting God, His power to raise up and use the sacrifice. Abraham trusted God, trusted every Word that God had said.

1. Abraham believed that God would raise up Isaac from the dead, if need be (v. 5). An astonishing belief; nevertheless, it is exactly what Scripture says. Note verse five:

Abraham instructed the servants to wait at the bottom of the mountain while he and Isaac went to the top and worshipped. He then said that both he and Isaac would return. Abraham was not lying to the men; he *actually believed* they both would return. Hebrews tells us what Abraham was thinking: God would raise Isaac from the dead, if need be (Heb 11:17-19).

The point is this: Abraham knew that God's Word — His promise — was true: his son would live and give rise to nations of people and to the promised seed, the Saviour of the world. Therefore, God would raise Isaac from the dead, if need be, to fulfil His promise. Abraham's trust in God had grown so much that he actually believed that God would resurrect Isaac. He was learning — really learning — what total surrender meant. Abraham was casting himself completely upon God.

Keep in mind, Abraham had never seen any person raised from the dead. But the thought crossed his mind, and he gave great thought to the idea. He believed that God would raise Isaac in order to fulfil His promise. What faith! What great belief in God and His promises, in God and His power! Note how Abraham was surrendering to God all the way through this experience.

2. Abraham and Isaac had a tender walk together up to the top of the mountain. Abraham was bound to be hurting, his heart suffering a piercing pain as though a knife had been thrust into his soul. He would have been preoccupied, in deep, intense thought. As they walked along together, drawing closer and closer to the place of sacrifice, Isaac would have sensed that something was bearing ever so heavily upon his father. Note that Isaac asked where they were going to get a lamb for the sacrifice.
3. Abraham again showed his great trust in God by simply saying that God Himself would provide the lamb for the offering. True, Abraham knew that God could raise Isaac from the dead if need be. But Abraham also knew that God could stop him and provide a lamb if He so willed.

These two beliefs were flooding Abraham's mind. He had no idea what God was going to do, but he trusted God. He knew that God had promised to send nations of people through Isaac and to save the world through his descendent, the coming Saviour of the world. And Abraham believed God. He believed...

- that God could raise Isaac from the dead, if need be
- that God could stop him from sacrificing Isaac and provide a lamb for the offering

Abraham believed God, believed God's power to raise up and use Isaac to fulfil the great promises of God. He believed that God would do whatever was necessary to fulfil His promises, His Word.

***Thought 1.*** What is it that stirs us to sacrifice our lives to God, to make an absolute surrender to Him? Trust, believing that God has the power to raise us up and use us. And God does: He does have the power to take our lives, raise them up, and use them for



good throughout the whole world. We must, therefore, trust God and sacrifice our lives in absolute surrender to Him — for the sake of the world, the needy and lost of the world.

***Psa 31:19** How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

***Psa 37:5** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.*

***Psa 118:8** It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man [his reasoning and power].*

***Prov 3:5-6** Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

***Isa 26:3-4** You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.*

***Rom 4:20-21** Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

***2 Pet 1:4** Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

***1 John 2:25** And this is what he promised us — even eternal life.*

#### **IV. Genesis 22:09–10 Following Through with the Sacrifice**

Step four to absolute surrender is following through with the sacrifice. This is the most important step in sacrificing one's life to God, in making the absolute surrender to God. It had been three days since God had instructed Abraham to make the supreme sacrifice, to offer his own son as a sacrifice to God. Abraham had three long days to agonize over the matter. For three days — days that had passed far too quickly — Abraham had taken weary step after weary step, with a heart so heavy that he must have felt as though it would burst. Now, father and son had reached the fatal place.

1. Abraham made final preparations. He built an altar and laid the wood on the altar, and then the fatal, final moment came to bind and offer the sacrifice. Would Abraham do it? Did Abraham love God enough to obey His Word, to make the supreme sacrifice to God? To offer his own son as a sacrifice to God? Scripture tells us in tense, graphic statements: “[Abraham] bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son” (v. 10).
2. Note that Abraham actually bound and laid the sacrifice, his own son, on the altar. But note also that Isaac willingly let his father bind and offer him. Abraham was an elderly man, and Isaac was probably around twenty years old. Isaac could have easily overcome his father and fled away, but Scripture says nothing about a struggle. H.C. Leupold states it well:

*Now, O marvel of marvels, he actually binds his own son! Isaac's submission to this act is best explained as an act of confidence in his father, a confidence built upon a complete understanding and a deep love which knew that the father could wish his son no harm. Therefore, even as it is not said that Abraham achieved the complete submission of faith, but the whole story is convincing evidence that he did; so in Isaac's case the same submission, only more passive in character, is also present. That Isaac suffered himself to be bound is an act of supreme faith in God and of full confidence in his father. (H. C. Leupold. Genesis, Vol. 2, p. 627).*

3. Note that Abraham actually offered up the sacrifice, made the absolute surrender to God. He reached out and took the knife to slay his son. Abraham was obeying God: he loved God more than anything; therefore, he would obey God no matter the cost. He was willing to sacrifice everything, to give and offer everything to God. Abraham was totally, absolutely surrendered to God.

**Thought 1.** Have you offered up your life as a sacrifice to God? Have you made the absolute surrender of your life to God? Have I?

=> Do we love God more than anything?

=> Are we willing to sacrifice ourselves totally for God and His cause?

=> Are we willing to sacrifice everything for God — to actually give God everything — our *lives* and our *possessions*?

=> Again, are we willing to sacrifice everything for God — all our possessions — in order to take the gospel of God's Son to the uttermost part of the earth?

=> Are we willing to obey God totally, no matter the cost?

=> Are we totally surrendered — absolutely surrendered — to God?

Abraham was; we must be. We must give ourselves totally to God. We must give all that we possess — everything — to get the Word of God out to the whole world.

**Luke 9:23** *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

**Luke 9:24-25** *"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"*

**Mat 16:25** *"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*

**Mark 10:28** *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"*

**Luke 14:26** *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

**Luke 14: 33** *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

**Luke 18:29-30** *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

**Thought 2.** Mathew Henry has a graphic description of this event:

*After many a weary step, and with a heavy heart he arrives at length at the fatal place, builds the altar... for his Isaac’s funeral pile, and now tells him the amazing news: ‘Isaac, thou art the lamb which God has provided.’ Isaac... is as willing as Abraham; we do not find that he raised any objection against it, that he petitioned for his life, that he attempted to make his escape, much less that he struggled with his aged father, or made any resistance... God will have it done, and Isaac has learnt to submit to both, Abraham no doubt comforting him with the same hopes with which he himself by faith was comforted. Yet it is necessary that a sacrifice be bound. The great sacrifice, which in the fullness of time was to be offered up, must be bound, and therefore so must Isaac.... Having bound him, he lays him upon the altar, and his hand upon the head of his sacrifice; and now, we may suppose, with floods of tears, he gives, and takes, the final farewell of a parting kiss.... This being done, he resolutely forgets the bowels of a father, and puts on the awful gravity of a sacrificer. With a fixed heart, and an eye lifted up to heaven, he takes the knife, and stretches out his hand to give the fatal cut to Isaac’s throat. Be astonished, O heavens! at this; and wonder, O earth! Here is an act of faith and obedience, which deserves to be a spectacle to God, angels, and men....[Isaac is] ready to bleed and die by his own father’s hand.... Now this obedience of Abraham in offering up Isaac is a... representation...*

- (1) *Of the love of God...in delivering up his only-begotten Son to suffer and die for us, as a sacrifice. It pleased the Lord himself to bruise him. See Isa 53:10; Zec 13:7.*
- (2) *Of our duty to God, in return for that love. We must tread in the steps of this faith of Abraham. God, by his word, calls us to part with all for Christ — all our sins... all those things that are competitors and rivals with Christ... we must cheerfully let them all go. God... calls us to part with an Isaac sometimes, and we must do it with a cheerful resignation and submission to his holy will. (Mathew Henry. Mathew Henry’s Commentary. Vol. 1, p. 139)*

## **V. Genesis 22:11–14 Experiencing God’s Acceptance and Provision**

Step five to absolute surrender is experiencing God’s acceptance and provision. Now comes the great joy of sacrificing everything to God.

1. God accepted the sacrifice and surrender of Abraham’s heart. He called out to stop Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. When Abraham reached out and took the knife to

slay his son, God knew that Abraham was totally surrendered to Him. God knew that Abraham's heart belonged to Him — totally and absolutely. Nothing, absolutely nothing, stood between Abraham and God. Abraham would sacrifice anything and do anything for God. Abraham would obey God, no matter the sacrifice or cost. God was the most precious person and the most treasured thing in Abraham's life.

Note that God acknowledged this. He knew...

- that Abraham feared God — revered and trusted God — above all else (v. 12)
- that Abraham loved God more than his own son (v. 12)

Within his heart, Abraham had offered the supreme sacrifice to God. Within his heart, Abraham had made the absolute surrender of himself to God.

The point is this: God is after the hearts of people, the surrender of their spirits to Him, not the slaying of their bodies.

=> God wants living sacrifices, not dead sacrifices.

=> God wants the bodies of people, but He wants living bodies, not dead bodies.

=> God wants a human sacrifice, but He wants the sacrifices living, not dead.

God wants people to sacrifice their lives — their hearts, spirits and bodies — to Him. He wants people to surrender themselves — totally and absolutely, but He wants them living, not dead. God accepts a living sacrifice, not a dead one.

**Rom 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**Thought 1.** God accepted the sacrifice of Abraham's heart. It is always the willingness, the surrender of the heart that makes the offering of a sacrifice acceptable to God. God is after the heart, not the sacrifice. Our hearts must reach out to God before we lay a sacrifice before God.

**1 Sam 15:22** *But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."*

**Psa 51:16-17** *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

**Prov 21:3** *To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

**Isa 1:11-18** *"The multitude of your sacrifices — what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons,*

*Sabbaths and convocations — I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*

**Jer 7:22-23** *For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you.*

**Micah 6:6-8** *With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

**Heb 10:6-10** *With burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am — it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, O God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” — though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

2. God provided a substitute sacrifice. God gave Abraham a ram to offer as a substitute for Isaac (v. 13). (See note, *Burnt Offering*, Gen 8:20.)
3. Abraham worshipped God and memorialised the place forever (v. 14). He named the place *the mountain of the LORD, Jehovah-Jireh*. The Hebrew means the Lord provides. And provide He did. The Lord met Abraham’s need: He gave Abraham a substitute sacrifice instead of his son.

**Thought 1.** Abraham’s offering his son Isaac is a picture of God offering His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for man. The sacrifice of Isaac is a type — a symbol, a picture, a prophecy — of the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, the sacrifice of God’s very own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the sins of the world.

⇒ Abraham was asked to give up his most cherished possession to God; God has given up His most cherished possession to man (vv. 1-2).

- => Abraham was asked to sacrifice his own son for God; God has sacrificed His only Son for man (v. 2, see Jn. 3:16; Rom 8:32).
- => Abraham believed that God would raise up his son, if need be; God did raise up His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Note: it can even be said that Isaac was *as good as dead* (sacrificed) in the heart of Abraham during the three days of traveling before the resurrection. The resurrection of both Isaac and Christ took place three days after their death (v. 5).
- => Isaac was apparently willing to obey God and be sacrificed, for there is no evidence of a struggle. Isaac was obedient to death even as Christ was obedient to death (Phil 2:5-8).
- => The ram was provided as a substitute for Isaac; the lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was provided as a substitute for all mankind (v. 13, see Jn. 1:29; Isa 53:5-7).
- => Isaac carried the wood upon which he was to be laid as a sacrifice; Christ carried the cross upon which He was to be hung as the sacrifice for the sins of the world (v. 6).
- => Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice upon Mt. Moriah, the very mountain upon which Jerusalem was built (2 Chr 3:1); God offered up Christ on Calvary, right outside Jerusalem, upon the very same mountain ridge or range where Isaac was offered (v. 2). (Note: this tells us why God had Abraham travel three days to offer Isaac on Mt. Moriah. The offering of Isaac was planned by God to be a type of God's offering of Christ.
- => Abraham called Mt. Moriah *Jehovah-Jireh*, "*the LORD will provide.*" God *provided* a substitutionary sacrifice for Abraham; God has *provided* a substitutionary sacrifice for us in the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 13-14).
- => Isaac was to bear the consuming fire of Abraham; Jesus Christ has borne the consuming fire of God's holiness and judgment against sin (the Bible often uses fire to symbolize the holiness and judgment of God) (v. 6).
- => Abraham received the great joy of God's promise because he willingly sacrificed his will to God's will; Jesus Christ is to experience the fulfilment of His joy because He totally surrendered His will to God's will and sacrificed Himself for the sins of the world (vv. 15-18, see Heb 12:2).

**GENESIS 22: 14 THE LORD WILL PROVIDE — JEHOVAH-JIREH**

The term *Jehovah-Jireh* means the LORD will provide. On the mountain of the LORD, God provides. He provides a sacrifice, a substitute sacrifice for Isaac. God provides for His followers. □

**VI. Genesis 22:15–18 Renewing God's Promises to One's Heart**

Step six to absolute surrender is having God's promises renewed to one's heart. The angel of the LORD called out to Abraham again, his voice apparently sounding out from heaven. Abraham was to be rewarded for his obedience, and no greater reward could be given.

1. God gave Abraham a solemn oath, the most solemn oath He could give. God swore by Himself; He staked His promises upon His own nature and name. God could swear by no greater name or person than Himself. He and He alone would stand behind the promises of His Word (see Heb 6:13).

Note why God was giving Abraham so great a confirmation of the promises: because Abraham had obeyed God, done exactly what God had told him to do: he had offered his son as a sacrifice to God (v. 16).

2. God renewed the promise of *the promised seed*, meaning a great nation of people (v 17a). Abraham's descendants were to number as the stars of the sky and as the sand upon the seashore.

Note that Abraham's descendants were to possess the cities of their enemies (v. 17c). This most likely refers to the spiritual seed, the believers of the earth, who will rule and reign in the new heavens and earth.

3. God renewed the promise of *the promised seed*, meaning the Saviour of the world (see outline and notes, Gen 12:2; 12:3; 15:2-6; 17:6-8).

**Thought 1.** The great promises of God are sure, guaranteed and confirmed by God Himself. God has sworn that He stands behind every single promise. Every promise will be fulfilled, literally and completely fulfilled. The omnipotent power of God guarantees their fulfilment.

But note to whom the promises are given, who it is that will receive the promises of God: *the obedient*. The person who follows and obeys God, who does exactly what God says, receives the promises of God. The person who sacrifices all, who absolutely surrenders himself to God, will have the promises of God take effect in his life.

**Rom 4:21** *Being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

**2 Cor 1:20** *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

**2 Tim 2:13** *If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*

**2 Pet 1:4** *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

**1 John 2:25** *And this is what he promised us — even eternal life.*

**1 Kng 8:56** *Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.*

## VII. **Genesis 22:19–24 Conclusion: Received Good News**

Abraham, God's servant, received good news.

1. Abraham travelled back and settled in Beersheba (v. 19).

2. Abraham received some good news about his brother Nahor. Remember, there had been no contact between the two brothers for about sixty years. Nahor lived in Mesopotamia, probably in the city of Nahor named after him. The distance was just too far away for him and Abraham to visit each other. A travelling caravan probably brought the news of Nahor to Abraham.
3. Abraham's brother Nahor had been blessed with a large family. This passage seems to be given here to show the roots of Rebekah, who was soon to become the wife of Isaac.

### GENESIS 22:01–02 TESTING; CRISES OF LIFE

The life of Abraham gives an excellent study on the tests or crises of life. It is important to note that every crisis and problem in human life is not a test from God. We often bring crises upon ourselves because of our sin and disobedience to God. But there are times when God does test us, and we need to understand this fact.

1. Note how God tests a person.
  - a. God tests a person by initiating the test Himself, as in this case with Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice.
  - b. God tests a person by allowing the crisis to arise from natural or human events. Examples of this are seen in point three of this note.
  - c. In some cases, God allows Satan to create a crisis that tests the faith and loyalty of believers. The book of *Job* shows this.
2. Now note why God tests believers (see note 1, 1 Pet 4:12).
  - a. God tests believers to make them stronger. When a person endures and conquers a crisis, he is inwardly stronger than ever before. He is far more able to conquer crises in the future.

*2 Cor 4:16* Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

*2 Cor 12:9* 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

- b. God tests believers to make them look forward to heaven more. Crises, especially severe crises of suffering, pain and grief, make us long far more for heaven.

*2 Cor 4:17-18* For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

*Heb 11:8-10* By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where



*he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

**Heb 11:13-16** *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

**Rev 21:4** *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

- c. God tests believers to make them a greater witness to those around them. When a person endures and conquers a crisis, he is a testimony to others, a living example that a person can overcome the crises of this life.

**2 Cor 1:3-4** *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

- 3. Note the tests that Abraham had to face throughout his life. He had to face crisis after crisis — major tests — all throughout his life, far more than the average person has to face. Abraham stands as a dynamic example in showing us how to conquer crisis after crisis. He conquered them all through faith and power of God.
  - a. There was the crisis of God’s call to separation. When God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees, he had to separate from his country and relatives, and from his father’s house, its possessions and property. He had to separate from all he had ever known. At first, Abraham showed weakness in accepting God’s call, but he finally passed the test and committed his life to God. (See outline and notes, Gen 12:4-9.)
  - b. There was the crisis of hunger and famine and of losing his business holdings. In fact, Abraham faced the loss of all he had. Abraham failed this test. He forsook the promised land and went down into Egypt (a symbol of the world and a life of worldliness) (see outline and notes, Gen 12:10-13:4).
  - c. There was the crisis of Lot’s separation from Abraham. This separation was due to the materialistic and greedy nature of Lot. Abraham must have suffered unbearable pain when Lot chose the best ranch land and left the second best for Abraham.

Abraham loved Lot like a son; therefore, he suffered excruciating pain when Lot forsook God to choose the world over God (see outline and notes, Gen 13:5-18).

- d. There was the crisis of the invading army from the East. Dealing with this crisis required great courage. The invaders captured all the citizens of the surrounding cities, including Lot. Not only was Abraham about to lose Lot, he was about to lose the markets for his business enterprises. All he had was again being threatened. Abraham met the crisis head-on and demonstrated unusual courage in defeating the invaders and in freeing the captives (see outline and notes, Gen 14:1-16).
- e. There was the crisis of seeking worldly honour, power, position and riches. When Abraham defeated the invading armies, he could have become the ruler over much of the land, but he refused to run ahead of God and to use worldly methods to secure the promised land. Abraham passed this test (see outline and notes, Gen 14:17-24).
- f. There was the crisis of not having a son, of having to be patient enough to wait upon God and His timing for sending the promised son. This crisis required patience and belief. Abraham failed in this test and married Hagar and bore Ishmael (see outline and notes, Gen 16:1-16).
- g. There was the crisis of God's judgment and emotional security. This was the crisis of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities. Their destruction left a devastation of the area that must have been horrible to look upon and emotionally disturbing (see Gen 20:1-2). Moreover, their destruction meant a crisis for Abraham's business dealings: the major markets for his herds and other dealings were gone (see outline and notes, Gen 19:1-38).
- h. There was the crisis of again facing the loss of all he had. Abraham again forsook the promised land and went down to the capital of the Philistines in search of markets for his herds and business affairs (see outline and notes, Gen 20:1-18).
- i. There was the crisis of being separated and divorced from his loved ones. This was the crisis of having to send Hagar and his son Ishmael away. This meant that he would be separated forever from Hagar and his son Ishmael whom he loved ever so dearly (see outline and notes, Gen 21:8-21).
- j. There was the supreme crisis of offering Isaac as a sacrifice to God. This required total commitment to God, being willing to sacrifice everything for God (see outline and notes, Gen 22:1-24).

**Thought 1.** Warren Wiersbe has given descriptive titles to the tests Abraham faced during his life. His commentary on the tests should be of real help as we face the trials and temptations of life.

*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 (Gen 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 pasture land (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.*

*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 fulfil. 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 (James 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?*

*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. That is the first lesson we must learn: Expect trials from God, because the Christian life is not easy. (Warren Wiersbe. *Be Obedient*, pp. 108-109). □*