



DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The Trial of Faith ... by Gareth

READ GENESIS 22: 1-19

● THE MEASURE OF FAITH'S TESTING.

- How much is faith tested? It is clear that some are, or appear to be, tested more than others. For example, not all are tested to the same extent as Abraham, Job or Paul. Is there any ruling principle which will give us an explanation of the degree of testing?
- There are degrees of faith, which we quickly learn by a comparison of *Mark 4:40; Matthew 6:30; 17:20; Luke 17:5; 7:9* (the references should be looked up in that order). To offer Isaac was not Abraham's first test of faith, it was nearly his last! He would not have been ready for this great trial at the beginning of his experience of faith in God. This is also true in our experience. We begin by trusting God simply for pardon, but as we go on we learn to trust Him in ten thousand other ways and for ten thousand other matters. As faith grows it is tried and tested according to its measure; but have no fear – *1 Corinthians 10:13*

● THE MANNER OF FAITH'S TESTING

- In other words, how is faith tested? The Bible is packed full of illustrations of men and women whose faith was tested. Sometimes in the testing of faith our affections are touched, as was the case with Abraham in the portion we are considering, and we hear the Lord saying to us, 'My child, put back into My hands what I have given you.' Sometimes the test comes in the realms of our bodies, as was the case with Paul – *2 Corinthians 12:7-9. "Thorn in the flesh"*
- I believe this is true even of some in this place today. Sometimes the trial of faith involves the loss of position, the upsetting of our carefully laid plans, the seemingly mysterious intervention of God's hand; but faith's testing is always for God's glory and for our good, and our part is to rejoice in the truth of *Job 23:10 "He knows the way that I take: when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* *Romans 8:28 "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"*

● THE MEANING OF FAITH'S TESTING

- Why does God test our faith? There is a sense in which faith must never ask 'Why?' because faith trusts the Lord and leaves the 'Why's' to Him; and yet it is true to say that God has told us in His Word some reasons why He tests our faith: *God tries our faith to prove the reality of it.*
- Only when faith is tested is the reality of faith proved and demonstrated — compare *Genesis 22:1* and *12*; it was as if God said, 'Abraham, do you trust Me?.....All right! Prove it!'
- *God tries our faith to increase the measure of it.* How strong Abraham's faith was after he had trusted God for the gift of Isaac! – as *Romans 4:20* tells us; "*Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God*" but how much stronger it would have been after the experience of *Genesis 22*! He would then be able to say with Job – *Job 13:15. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him"*

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WEEKLY EVENTS/NOTICES

Week 41

- A little tree is strengthened by the wind; that is, by adversity. *God tries our faith to secure the preciousness of it.* 1 Peter 1:7 is a great verse. The gold of our life is to His 'praise, glory and honour' when it is separated from the dross, and the trial of our faith is so precious because it brings about this separation.
- *God tries our faith to produce the fruit of it.* This is what we learn from John 15:2, particularly in the last part of the verse. Our heavenly gardener is looking for fruit (verse 2), more fruit (verse 2), and much fruit (verses 5 and 8); and one method He employs for producing this increasing amount of fruit in the lives of His children is that of trial and testing. 'Faith blossoms when the winds of trial blow the fiercest.'
- *God tries our faith to use the testimony of it.* Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; Philippians 1:12, and then compare Acts 16:22-25, particularly noticing the last words of verse 25. "but the prisoners were listening to them"
- God will always give back to us far more than He asks us to give up for Him. He may do the giving back in this life, but if not, He will most certainly grant us an abundant reward in the life to come – read 1 Peter 4:12-19.

Events /Notices

- ▶ **Next Friday 21st Sept @ 8pm** new format Bible studies on ministry in the church will begin. This is aimed at helping members to identify their gifts and calling and will include practical elements. This meeting will be scheduled every second Friday.
- ▶ **Next Sunday 23rd Sept meeting** will begin at 10.00am and there will be a half hour break around 11.45 followed by a prayer session until 3pm. This will be a time for us to discover a renewed sense of what the Lord is calling us to do both as individual believers and as a church. Fasting during this time is recommended.
- ▶ **Date of Baptismal service** is yet to be confirmed due to practical issues but we hope that this can be resolved by the end of the month. Those wishing to be baptised should speak with the pastors.
- ▶ **Journey to the potter's house' teaching ministry** will take place at 7pm on Sunday evening 14th October. This is a visual demonstration of a biblical concept which is enriching for struggling Christians and liberating for the broken and the lost. Dr Michael Ferris, psychologist, lecturer and ex naval seal will be with us for this event.