

# God Tests Before He Promotes

by Zac Poonen

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*God tests us to humble us, teach us to listen to Him, and help us discover our purpose in life.*

**Duration:** 59:19

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:12, 1 Samuel 16:7, Acts 13:22, Romans 2:11, James 2:23

**Topics:** "Faith Testing", "Discipleship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being chosen by God for a task, urging believers to seek God's purpose for their lives. It highlights the need for wholehearted discipleship, questioning if God can choose them for a specific task in their lifetime. The sermon stresses the significance of passing God's tests, like Abraham, to experience God's blessings and fulfill His plans.

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## Transcript

Right from the beginning of scripture, throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, we see God choosing certain people for a task. And we also know that God is not partial. There is no partiality with God.

So, any wholehearted disciple of Jesus, when he reads the stories of these men whom God chose, will begin to ask himself, is it possible that God can choose me also to do some task for him in my earthly lifetime before I leave this earth? If you don't ask that question, you can just drift along without any purpose in life. You know, it's like if you put a log of wood out in the ocean. It doesn't go anywhere, but it moves.

The waves will move it one way, another way, and you never know where it will end up. And I think most Christians are like that. There is no purpose in their life, there is no understanding of anything particular God has called them to do.

They just come along to the meetings, they don't commit any gross sin, they read their Bibles, and maybe they give a little money for God's work. But at the end of their life, if you ask, what did God do through them? The answer is probably nothing. God's work and God's purposes, it wouldn't have made a difference if those people hadn't even lived.

Isn't it terrible that you can live on this earth and leave it, and as far as God's kingdom is concerned, it wouldn't have made a difference whether you lived or died, or whether you never lived. And that's terrible,

but that's the sort of life that most Christians live. And yet, I want to say to all of you that that is not God's will for anybody.

But every single person who has had the opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ, and who has responded, from that moment, God has got a plan for that person's life. You know, when you come to the end of a year, companies take a stocktaking to see how much profit they have made. In schools, they conduct examinations to see whether the student has learned something and is ready to be promoted to the next class.

All enterprises on earth do that. Schools, companies, Christians also need to do that, to see what has the Lord taught me this year. I don't mean head knowledge, but in my life, are there sins that I have overcome, or is it just the same as it was a year ago? I mean, most people wouldn't be happy to sit in the same class in school the next year.

They'd be terribly disturbed. Many Christians are quite happy to live with the same old defeated lives that they've had for many, many years. So, just like schools conduct examinations, and examinations are good, we know they're good, they're difficult, but they're good, because at the end of every examination, there's a promotion.

And that's why we don't allow our children to miss examinations, because if they miss examinations, they don't get promoted. And what we read in the scriptures is that God also tests His people. That's something that has been coming to my heart more and more, as I've considered the reason why so many Christians, even in our churches, who have heard truths for many, many, many years, sometimes, or very often, don't seem to make as much spiritual progress as people in a lot of other churches who haven't heard all these truths.

Now, how is that possible? One would think that the more of God's truth we hear and understand, the more blessed our life should be, the more powerful, the more full of joy and victory and purpose. But I have discovered through many, many years of observation that that is not true. Sometimes people who have very little accomplish more.

I mean, that's like saying, you would think that the student whose father is very rich, to get him all the textbooks and CDs and connect to the internet and everything else, and has got a car to take him to school and bring him back, should come first in the class. But he doesn't. Sometimes such people come at the bottom of the class.

And some other poor boy who walks to school and doesn't have any computer at home, and whose parents can't buy him a whole lot of books and all, comes first. How is that? It's very much like that in the Christian life too. You know, in this church, I believe, spiritually speaking, we have to compare ourselves with children from rich families, spiritually speaking, because we've got so much information, so much knowledge.

And just like a lot of children from rich families are thoroughly spoiled, I have discovered that many churches that have got so much information, the people are thoroughly spoiled. They pamper, everything is done for them, and they depend more on people, not upon God. And what is happening, they are not realizing, is year after year, they are failing test after test after test after test, and they are sitting in the same class.

And if there is a reason why people are sitting in the same class, it's just because they are failing the tests. Immediately after the Lord delivered the Israelites from Egypt, I want you to turn to Exodus in Chapter 15. This is in Chapter 14, we read about the deliverance from Egypt, and how the Egyptians were buried under the Red Sea.

We read in the end of Chapter 14, and Chapter 15 begins with Exodus 15, with this tremendous time of praise and worship to God for what He accomplished. And that's a picture of our redemption, by the blood of the Lamb, from Satan, when we've come out of the grip of the devil. And then, we read here, that the first thing that happened, immediately after they came out of Egypt and they had this time of praise, and they sang in verse 23, Miriam was leading the singing, and saying, the horse and the rider, the Lord has thrown into the sea, sing to the Lord.

Okay, so they've just come out, and the Lord led, Moses led Israel, from the Red Sea, verse 22, into the wilderness. And there, they were tested. Just like Jesus was tested in the wilderness.

So, the first thing that happened, as soon as they came out, God began to test them. Many, many times, through the wilderness journey. A picture of our life on earth, where as soon as we are redeemed, God begins to test us to see how much He can commit to us.

And we read there, that they came to the waters of Marah, and that was a test. When something doesn't work out the way you expect, you expect God to provide everything, right? He's done some wonderful thing for you, just delivered you from Egypt, so therefore, you should have no more problems in your life. And, sure enough, there's a problem.

There's no water to drink, the water is bitter. It was a test. What are the people going to do? And, they failed.

Because it says here, they began to grumble, in verse 24. And when you grumble, you know you got zero. You failed the test.

It doesn't matter what you grumble about. The moment you grumble, what you're saying is, Well, Satan, I believe you're in charge of the world. God can do very little here.

And I'm pretty upset. Because it looks as if Satan's got control of the situation. When a person begins to praise the Lord, in the midst of his problems, he says, I don't care what the problems are.

God, my Father, is still in control of everything. That's the difference between passing the test and failing. So Moses cried out, and God pointed a stick of wood or a tree, and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

The solution was just there. Just next to them was the solution. And very often, when we face a problem, the solution is right there.

And it says there, listen to this verse, verse 25. There God made the last part. He made a statute and a regulation, and there he tested them.

That's the place, the Message Bible says, where God set up rules. And that's where he started testing them. Immediately after they came out of Egypt.

And in the next chapter, you read that they began to get manna from heaven, because they needed food every day. And the Lord provided, it says there in verse 14 of chapter 16, and the layer of dew evaporated, there was a fine flake-like thing like frost on the ground. And they said, what is it? And Moses said to them, verse 15 of chapter 16, this is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.

And so gather as much as you can and eat every day. And every day, they had to go out and take the manna, in order to survive, because there was no other way of survival in the desert. So that's the next thing that happened.

And if you want to understand the purpose of that, you got to turn to Deuteronomy chapter 8 and see. Deuteronomy chapter 8, at the end of 40 years, of receiving this manna every day from heaven, Moses tells them, did you fellows know, that all these 40 years God was testing you? He was trying to test you. You didn't know that.

Very often, we don't know that God is testing us, till the test is over. You know, in school, sometimes the teacher may tell the students, hey, today we're going to have a surprise test. The students are not prepared for it.

But at least you know that it's a test. But with God, He doesn't tell us. After everything is over, He says, hey, that was a test by the way.

But it's over. And after 40 years, He says in verse 2, Deuteronomy 8 verse 2, You shall know, you remember all the way, which the Lord your God led you in the wilderness these 40 years, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart. For 40 years He tested you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

He humbled you and let you be hungry and fed you with manna. And why did He give you manna? To teach you that man does not live, verse 3, by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Because the manna came from heaven, you see, every day.

And yesterday's was not good enough for today. So, God was telling them, repeating a message every day for 40 years, that the only way that man can live is if he hears what God is saying to him. Now listen, that's not the same as reading the Bible.

Those fellows didn't have a Bible in the wilderness. But they were supposed to listen to the word of God. And for nearly 1400-1500 years, after the day of Pentecost, 1500 years from the day of Pentecost, no Christian had a Bible like this.

Because the printing press was invented in the 1400s. And it was a long centuries later that everybody began to have a Bible. So don't misunderstand that verse.

Why I say that is, many people ease their conscience by saying, well, I read the Bible today. Well, you may have read the Bible. You may say, you know the Bible.

The devil knows it better than anybody else. I mean, the devil knew the scripture so well that he could even quote a verse to Jesus. And the devil is always quoting verses to believers to lead them astray, to give them a false comfort when they should be disturbed.

Or to disturb them when they shouldn't be disturbed. So we got to go read more than the Bible. It doesn't say man shall live by reading the Bible.

It says man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Because that was the reason why God allowed the manna to stink in 24 hours. Now we buy bread in the shop.

That doesn't stink in 24 hours. Here it says, when they kept it for 24 hours, the worms started coming into it. I mean, worms.

I've never seen worms coming into bread in 24 hours. Man made bread. Worms don't come in 24 hours.

But the bread from heaven, worms come in 24 hours. There's something special there. Teaching you, you can't live by yesterday's word.

You can't live by a once a week message in the meeting. And it's not a question of reading the Bible every day. It's a question of listening to what God is saying.

Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Because the Bible can become to you like stinking manna. It is.

A lot of people have got it, knowledge of the Bible which they got sometime ago. It's not just 24 hours. They got it ages ago and it's stinking.

It doesn't seem to change their life. But the word that proceeds from the mouth of God means a continuous proceeding. God is always speaking.

That's why in the first chapter of the Bible, you read it says, every day it's written God said something. Isn't that how your Bible begins? Your Bible begins by saying that every day God said something. And when God said something, something happened on the earth.

Like it says in Isaiah 55 verse 11, my word which proceeds from my mouth will never return empty. It will accomplish something. So when God's word comes out of his mouth, like in Genesis 1, every day it accomplish something.

You don't read of one of the days in Genesis 1 where it says God said something and nothing happened. Such a day didn't exist. That happens with human beings.

God says something and the guy says, Oh well, I'll think about it. And he sits on it for years. And he doesn't live, because man should live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth.

So now, that means it is through that word that God tests us. And I'll tell you something, the primary way in which God speaks to us is through our conscience. So even though man may not have had a Bible like this for 5500 years of his existence, all those 5500 years he had a conscience through which God spoke to him.

When Adam stood before the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he could hear the voice of God in his conscience and so could he. I mean imagine you and I who have fallen so much into sin in our life, don't you hear your conscience tell you something when you're tempted to do something wrong? And if we, in our fallen condition, can hear a voice of conscience, can you imagine how loudly Eve heard it in her heart when she stood before the tree? It must have been like a trumpet. A person who's never sinned, who's

come straight from God's presence, conscience must have been like a trumpet sound saying, don't take from that.

And the devil with his sweet voice says, oh well, it wasn't only one voice speaking there. When you read Genesis chapter 3, you think it's only one voice, but it's not only one voice. There was another voice speaking much louder in Eve's conscience because God breathed into them and gave them a conscience which no animal had and they were being tested.

So Genesis 3 was a test. And with that voice of God saying something in her conscience, you don't need a Bible. A conscience is enough to lead you.

Ultimately, if you give your life to Christ, the Holy Spirit makes your conscience more and more sensitive. Ultimately, that's the way by which God speaks to us. For example, when you are tempted to speak evil about someone behind his back, I mean, if you've been in this church for a few years, you'd certainly feel a pang of conscience there unless you killed it and killed it by gossiping so much in your life that that poor conscience voice is so faint.

But even then, you feel bad after you have spoken evil. That's where God tests you. Now, what is he testing you in? He's testing whether you'll respond to that voice and say, God, I'm sorry.

I slipped up. I fell. That's what God is waiting for.

And if he hears that response from you, even though you failed, you'll pass the test. Because then he will cleanse you with his blood. And next time, your conscience will be more sensitive.

The voice of God will be a little clearer. You know, it's like when we get too much wax in our ears, we can't hear properly. Sometimes one ear gets filled up with wax, and people have got to go to get it cleaned out, or people clean up their ear, and it gets a little better, the hearing.

It's like that. When we respond, every time you respond to God, the voice of conscience becomes a little louder the next time. And every time you don't respond to God, the voice of conscience becomes a little dimmer.

And if you keep on not responding, a time can come, when you can do something totally wrong, and conscience doesn't even tell you anything. You've killed it. That's a terrible state to come into.

So, God wanted to teach them by giving them the manner that they had to learn to listen to God speaking to them every day. And, I'm sure you all know the scriptures. In the New Testament, when Jesus was baptized, what are the first words recorded in the Bible that he spoke after his baptism, where his ministry began? You know what those first words were? It was in the wilderness, to Satan.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Never forget this, my brothers and sisters. This verse that you read here are the first recorded words of Jesus when he began his ministry.

And you know that he never preached what he hadn't practiced. That is how he lived. And if you want to know one secret of Jesus' life, it was this, that he listened to what God was saying.

He didn't have a Bible. Do you know Jesus never had a Bible like this? Paul never had a Bible like this. But they could hear the voice of God, just like you and I can hear it.

And it's far more important what you do in response to that voice than whether you read your Bible every day. I'm not saying Bible reading is not important. My conscience has become more sensitive because I read the Bible.

If you don't read the Bible, you still have a conscience, but it won't be very sensitive. It will be like a weighing machine that doesn't give you the correct reading. It may be 100 kilos, and it may just show you 100 grams.

And that's why some people can do something serious and say, oh, that's not serious. It's only 100 grams. It's because the weighing machine is spoiled.

It's 100 kilos, brother, not 100 grams. But if you respond to God's word, your conscience will begin to register properly the proper weight of that sin. And you'll realize it's not such a light thing.

So I'm not saying reading God's word is not important. But what I'm saying is, reading that is no substitute for listening to conscience. I remember hearing the story of, I mean, the testimony of a great man of God, I forget his name, who was asked at the end of his life, Can you tell me one secret of your life? And he said, I have learned to listen to the promptings of the spirit in my conscience.

That's all. When he told me to hold back from something, I held back. When he told me, prompted me to do something, I did it.

If you ask me one secret of my life, that is it. I believe that. Because that's how God tests us.

And if you disobey, you're not going to get leprosy, or the world is not going to collapse, and your house is not going to catch fire, or you're not going to lose your job, nothing will happen. You'll live a perfectly normal life, even when you fail the test. Go and ask all these people who study in these capitation fee medical colleges, where they spend 10-15 years to get a 5-year degree.

They're quite happy. Their parents are spending such a lot of money. They've failed and failed and failed and failed umpteen times, but the world hasn't collapsed.

They haven't got leprosy. They just failed. And that's how it is with so many Christians.

They just fail, and they're quite happy. I'm amazed at some of these people who study in these medical colleges for 15 years to get a 4-year degree. How can they be happy? I mean, I'd feel miserable if I were there, and I had to spend one more year, or six more months.

But they seem to be quite happy. Then I can understand how some Christians are quite happy, even though they fail and fail and fail and fail. It's just the same thing.

Yeah, it's okay. I can't understand that, because I'd feel miserable if I did 1% of the things that some Christians do. Then I realize that they don't take their test seriously.

They probably don't even realize it's a test. God has tested His greatest servants. Let me show you the example of Abraham.

We read in Genesis 12. See, if you read carefully, it says here. Let me show you something.

Genesis 12. What's written here, the first sentence should read like this. The Lord had said to Abraham, when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you.

This is a very clear word. Man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Okay? God told Abraham when he was 75 years old, and living a comfortable retired life with his wife, built his house and settled down, expecting to live there till he dies.

All of a sudden, God speaks to him one day and says, leave your country, leave your relatives, leave your father's house, and go. This thing is what the Lord had spoken to him before chapter 11 verse 27. Or before chapter 11 verse 29.

Sorry, before chapter 11 verse 31. This section of scripture should come before 11 verse 31. This is what the Lord had told him.

And when Abraham heard it, he told his dad. Dad, his father's name was Terah. He told Terah, God's told me to leave this country, and I presume He's gonna take me to a better land.

And the dad said, oh, that's great. I'll come along. Now what had God told Abraham? Leave your father.

I have nothing to do with him. Leave your relatives. I'm calling you alone.

And then Abraham's brother's son Lot heard it and said, hey, that's great, uncle. I'll come along too. So this man who was supposed to go alone, went with his dad and his nephew, and they caused a lot of trouble for him, which always happens when you don't obey the word of God exactly.

When you try to please your relatives, rather than do what God says. Now, I don't blame Abraham, because he never had a Bible. He never had the background of information that we have with a full Bible.

He was starting out, I mean, he was an idol worshipper. He was contacting God for the first time, and he had to learn that when God said leave your father, you gotta leave your father. When He said leave your relatives, you gotta leave your relatives.

But he failed. And it says here, it doesn't say in verse 31 of chapter 11 that Abraham took his father along. No.

His father was the boss. It says Terah took Abraham, the 75-year-old son, and said, Hey, you're coming with me, okay? Abraham said, fine. And Terah said, we're taking Lot as well.

And they went out, in order to enter the land of Canaan, which God had called them to, but when they reached halfway, and they reached a place called Haran, they stopped. Because Abraham's dad said, hey, this looks a fantastic land. This must be the place God told us to come to.

It looks as if the grass is fertile here, and our cattle can pasture, and we make a lot of money here. So we're gonna stay here. This must be the land.

And poor little boy Abraham, 75-year-old Abraham, says, okay, dad. We'll do what you say. Isn't it terrible? When God's told you something, and you allow your dad and nephew and all types of people to override what God has said, and you miss out on what God... God loved Abraham so much, you know what he did? You know what he did? He killed his father.

Don't wait till that happens. Please. I think Terah would have lived a long life if he had just lived in Ur of the Chaldees.

Poor man made the mistake of going along with Abraham and fooling around with Abraham's God. It says he died. 205 years.

I think he'd have probably lived about 300-400 years if he had lived in Ur of the Chaldees. You know, we make our parents suffer when we try to please them. I'll tell you that.

If you want to bless your parents, obey God. Now God didn't forsake Abraham just because he failed a test. And he won't forsake you because you fail a test.

Boy, if God forsook us because we failed one test, none of us would be standing here. Thank God he has such mercy on us. We fail a thousand times and he says, OK, we'll try again.

That's great. He's like no other teacher. I love that song which says, No earthly father loves like you.

No mother ever so mild bears and forbears as you have done with me, your sinful child. Think of the best earthly father bearing with his sinful child and multiply that by a million. And you'll understand the heart of God.

It says we are children of Abraham. You know, I didn't choose God. He chose me.

Jesus said that very clearly to his disciples. You didn't choose me. I chose you.

And I want to say to all of you, dear brothers and sisters, it was no accident that you landed up in Bangalore and that you came to hear the word of God in this church. Things that can lead you to the most glorious life that any human being can ever live. How do I say that? Because I've tasted something of that.

I don't believe that there is a message on the face of the earth that can lead people to a more glorious life than what we preach here and what I've experienced for a number of years. Think of that, that God has allowed you to hear it. That doesn't make you spiritual.

You can take an absolute useless dunce of a boy or a girl and put him in the best school in Bangalore and he'll fail. He doesn't take his studies seriously. It's like that.

You can sit in the best church in the world and go to hell. Sure. I don't have any doubt about that.

In fact, I fear that some of the people who've been here through the years and heard the word of God and they got offended and left. I tell you honestly, I fear for them. I'm not God.

I'd be very happy if God takes the whole world to heaven. Including all the non-Christians and every other religion. I'd be very happy.

But it's not true. It's not going to happen if God's word is true. It's not going to happen.

And so I have a great fear for a lot of people who have not responded to what they've heard and just taken it lightly, played the fool with the word of God. But God is very, very merciful. As long as you're willing to sit in the school, as long as you're willing to stick it out, God will stick it out with you.

But if you give up, then God won't force you. He doesn't grab a person by the neck and say, Stay in school. It's like earthly schools too.

If some student drops out, the principal doesn't go running after him saying, Come back. God does that a number of times but he won't keep on doing that. So thank God for his mercy with people like Abraham.

Though they failed, he still continued to work with them. I mean, he did drastic things like killing his father. And it says, verse 4, Then, chapter 12, verse 4, Then Abraham went forth as the Lord had previously spoken to him.

I want you to understand this. Verse 32 of chapter 11, Terah died. And I want you to read this.

Let me paraphrase it. Terah died. But the Lord had spoken earlier to Abraham saying, Go forth from your country, from your relatives, from your father's house, chapter 12, verse 1, to the land I'll show you.

And Abraham had not obeyed. But now when Terah died, at last, verse 4, chapter 12, Abraham went forth as the Lord had originally spoken to him. But the problem was not completely solved because there's one more fellow there.

Lot was still with him. So God has to do something to separate Lot from Abraham. And that he doesn't do.

He could have done it by killing him. But I think he was a little merciful to him. He separated Lot from Abraham by creating a fight between Lot's servants and Abraham's servants over property.

Sometimes God separates certain people from us by allowing some controversy, some fight. I've experienced that in my life and I've experienced that in this church. God does a separation because He says, that's not the way I want you to go.

You're gonna get mixed up, Abraham, if you link up with Lot. He's got other plans. You know, it's like doing business in a partnership with an unbeliever.

I find a lot of believers who will never marry unbelievers, get into business partnerships with unbelievers and don't realize it's the same verse. Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Because the unbeliever wants to cheat and tell lies and do all types of wrong things to promote the business.

And God's blessing won't be on it. In fact, some believers like it because he'll do the dirty part of the job and I'll just get the profits. Okay, but the blessing of God won't be there.

That's what happens when Abraham and Lot work together and God's determined to separate because the Bible says in 2 Peter that Lot was a righteous man. I mean, if Peter hadn't said that inspired by the Holy Spirit, I wouldn't believe it. Because there's no evidence that this guy was righteous.

This guy was an absolute compromiser. He only was interested in money, but maybe he had a little spark of desire because you'd remember Abraham. I have a feeling that Lot was like one of those poor sincere believers who got a bad wife.

I've seen people like that. They are sincere and they get married to the wrong person and boy, their life is hell. And for the sake of peace in the home they have to not do this and not do that and allow this and allow that to please their wife.

And I have a feeling Lot was like that. The poor man, it says in 2 Peter 2, his soul was vexed with all the things that were going on and in his own house and he wanted to try and bring up his daughters in some way and the wife would say, nothing doing. I'm not going to allow you to bring up my girls that way.

Poor man would say, ok darling, do it your way. And those girls grew up all worldly and got worldly boyfriends. It was a terrible thing.

But this poor man, I think from 2 Peter I see that the guy was righteous. I've seen some believers exactly like Lot. Their life is miserable.

I remember one person like that who, before he got married I told him he asked me, do you have any advice for me? I said, be the head of your home. I saw him about 7-8 years later and said, do you have any advice for me? I said, same thing, be the head of your home. But now he had 7-8 years of experience in marriage and he said, brother, if I try to assert my headship there will be war at home.

I said, let there be war, fight the war and win. Don't yield and give up to the devil. These are the battles of the Lord.

You've got to win the battle. You can't hand over the headship of your house like Adam did. You know what happened in Eden when Adam handed over the headship to Eve.

God said, you listen to the voice of your wife. That's what God told Adam. You listen to the voice of your wife, get out of here.

You want to listen to me? So, Lot was like that. He failed, failed, failed, failed. To please his wife.

Maybe his wife was the one who said, Sodom is the best place, grab it, man. Before Abraham changed his mind, he offered you first choice, grab it. So, he grabbed it.

And he lost everything. He lost his wife, he lost his property, he lost all the money he had earned. And he lost his sons-in-law, they died.

He lost his daughters. I mean, his daughters didn't die, but it would have been better if they had died. I tell you honestly, if daughters are going to commit adultery with their father, I would say, any day it's better they die, rather than, that was worse.

And that's how the Moabites came. You know who Moab was? You hear of the Moabites in scripture? The enemies of Israel? They came from Lot having adultery with his own daughters. So, here God separated Abraham from Lot in that way too.

There also he tested him. He tested him by allowing Lot to, you know, this conflict to come and God watches Abraham and says, let me see what Abraham is going to do now. He's the senior man, he's the uncle.

And they are having this disagreement. And Abraham, the senior godly man, comes to Lot in chapter 13 of Genesis. He says in verse 8, Don't let there be any strife between you and me, Lot, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are, what? Brothers.

He wasn't his brother. You know how in India, uncles are, they have all these big, big titles in Tamil and Malayalam and everything. You can't call your uncle a brother.

What do you mean, brother? I am so and so, whatever title it is you have in your language. You dare not call him as an equal. I love that about Abraham.

75 years old, he tells his 30 year old young man, he doesn't say, listen man, your dad's my brother. I'm your uncle, okay? You never came, God didn't call you here, God called me. And I'm your uncle in every way.

I have the right to choose first. So you just sit quietly, I'll take what I want, and if you want you can go back home. He didn't say that.

He said, we are brothers. The whole land is in front of you, verse 9. You take what you want, and I'll take whatever you don't want. Imagine a Christian, sitting down with his family members when the father has died and the property is going to be divided, and speaking like this.

That's a real Christian. Hey listen, you guys take what you want, and what you don't want, give it to me. I don't preach what I have not practiced.

That is a Christian. I've seen that your attitude to money and property determines how much of salvation you have got in your life. The only time, the only time that Jesus said, salvation has come to this house is in Luke chapter 19, when Zacchaeus said, Lord, I'll give half my money to the poor, and I'll give back four times all the money I've cheated other people off.

Supposing a sales tax inspector in India says that one day. You'd really think he's saved, right? If he says, I'm going to go to all the shops and return all the four times the money I cheated from all those people, and I'm going to give half my money to the poor. I say, hey, what happened to you? He says, I'm born again.

I'd believe that. I'd believe that a hundred times more than some fellow who raises his hand in a meeting, signs a decision card and says, I want to accept the Lord. Doesn't cost him anything.

That's why Jesus said, when he heard that, salvation has come here, boy. This guy's attitude to money has changed. That can't happen unless salvation has come.

Has salvation come to you? Would Jesus say when he looks at you, salvation has come to this fellow. Yeah. So the Lord said to Abraham, verse 14 of chapter 13, after Lot had separated from him, Lift up your eyes.

Abraham, I saw everything that happened. I was the silent listener to the conversation you and Lot were having with each other just now. You thought nobody was listening.

Lot thought nobody was listening. I was listening. And Abraham, I saw how you conducted yourself, nobly, as my son, as my friend.

Abraham was called a friend of God. Okay, Abraham, you think you're going to lose because you trusted me? You think you're going to lose out in life, even in your earthly needs, because you honored me? You think those who honor God and give up their property because they don't want to have a fight and give up their money because they don't want to have a fight, you think God will allow them to live on the roadside? No. He will not.

You think He'll allow them to starve? You know what David said in Psalm 37? I think it's verse 25. He said, I was young once, but now I am an old man. He probably wrote it when he was 65 years old, after knowing

the Lord for 45 years.

And he said, I'll tell you one thing. In all my life, I've never seen a godly man forsaken by God. And I have never seen his children having to go around looking for a job, looking for food.

Never. I believe that. I'm around the same age now when David wrote that Psalm.

And I think I've known the Lord also the same number of years that David knew the Lord. And I can say, I've been young and now I'm old. I have never seen a righteous man forsaken by God till today.

And I've never seen a righteous man's children struggling without a job or struggling to find food or struggling to get a place to live. Never. He doesn't make them millionaires.

Thank God he doesn't. It would destroy them. But he takes care of them.

So the Lord told Abraham, You won't lose out Abraham by honoring me. I know you did that way. You acted like that with Lot to honor me.

You passed the test. Here is the reward. That's more than a gold medal or anything like that.

Here's the reward. Verse 14 of chapter 13. You lift up your eyes now and look to the north, south, east, and west.

Now, there's a difference. In verse 10 it says, Lot lifted up his eyes and looked east and saw the beautiful land of Sodom and Gomorrah, plenty of pasture, lot of opportunity to make money. He lifted up his eyes.

Notice that expression. Lot lifted up his eyes and went. But see what Abraham, he didn't lift up his eyes.

God told Abraham in verse 14, Abraham, you lift up your eyes. There's a lot of difference when God tells you to do something and you do it yourself. Lot lifted up his eyes and God told Abraham, you lift up your eyes.

You don't have to look east, Abraham. You look north, south, west, and east. Which lot has God? I will give all of this to you.

And not only to you, to your children forever. 4000 years have passed since God spoke those words to Abraham in the land of what was known as Canaan, today known as Israel. And do you know who's living in that land today? North, south, east, and west? The children of Abraham.

Not the children of Lot. God keeps his word. It's true.

He didn't promise to take all the children of Abraham to heaven. That's not what he said. I don't believe that all the children of Abraham go to heaven because that's not what he promised.

Go to heaven is quite another thing. You've got to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what God promised, he keeps.

He said, this land I'll give to your children and he kept it. 4000 years later, he still kept it. And whatever people may say and nations may decide, what God said, there comes true.

And so he said, you can walk through this land, I'll give it to you. Years later, I don't have time to go through all of that. You know that Abraham failed the test in chapter 20 where I like these true bible stories of people who made mistakes, who told lies to save their life.

Abraham told his Sarah, his wife, saying, please tell this king that you're my sister, otherwise they'll kill me and marry you. If you say you're my sister, my life will be saved. Maximum they'll rape you or something like that, that's okay.

But at least my life will be saved. Imagine Abraham treating his wife like that. They'll take you into his harem.

Okay, at least I'll be saved. That's what he tells. And remember Sarah? You know Sarah was actually Abraham's stepsister? So, it was half-truth.

But a half-truth is sometimes a lie. He says in verse 13, 12 of chapter 20, actually she is my sister. Because it was another mother, I mean my father married twice, so she's my stepsister.

She's not the daughter of my mother, but she's the daughter of my father and she became my wife. Abraham married his stepsister. Don't follow him there.

In certain areas we can follow Abraham, but in certain areas we must know where to follow and where not to follow. These people were living in the Old Testament and they had no laws, they had no understanding. But the point is, he told a lie and he was rebuked by an earthly king.

And he took it. That's great. If you can take a correction from an ungodly boss, when you know what he says is right, you humble yourself and say, yes sir, I was wrong.

And you are a Christian. That's great. See, Christians can sometimes do things which are wrong, which even an ungodly person has to correct.

And then, in chapter 22, we read that when, there are a number of ways in which God tested him, but let me come to the last one. It says in chapter 22, verse 1, after all this, God tested Abraham again. Now the guy is 125 years old, he was tested 50 years ago first, he is still being tested.

It's like a person who is studying PhD, saying, I was tested when I was 3 years old, and now I am 28 years old, and I am still being tested. It's something like that. But he is not being tested with the same thing.

I mean, in PhD, they are not asking you what 2 plus 2 is. So, the test gets higher and higher as you go to higher classes. And Abraham was tested.

Because God wanted to give him a promotion. Every test is for a promotion. And this time, was the greatest test of all, the final test.

Ok Abraham, now I want you to kill your son. He already, in the previous chapter, God told him, send away your first son. He did that, he passed that test.

Now you got only one son, kill him. And sure enough, it says, early the next morning. I like that phrase.

Verse 3, chapter 22. Early in the morning. He got up, to obey God.

And I think he went out early in the morning, before Sarah got up, so that he doesn't have to tell her, what he is planning to do, with their son. Sometimes, it's not wise to tell our wives, something that unnecessarily disturbs them. I think Abraham was a wise man.

He quietly took his son. Can you imagine, his getting up, telling Sarah, hey listen, I'm just going to kill my son. We're just going to kill him, and I'll come back without him.

She wouldn't understand. You see, when God gives a man a vision, sometimes the wife may not understand. Sometimes she does, sometimes she doesn't.

God's given a man a vision. Sarah was a wonderful woman, and the Bible says, she just obeyed Abraham, and whatever he said. She was a great woman.

It says in 1 Peter 3. He just trusted. He was a man of God, and I can trust him. And Abraham took Isaac, and was just about to kill him.

God said, stop. I've seen, that you love me more than you love your son. That's all I wanted to find out.

Now, because you've done this, chapter 22, I swear, God says in verse 16, because you've done this, you've not withheld your son. There will be no limit to the way I'm going to bless you and your children. Absolutely no limit.

All the nations of the earth will be blessed. Brothers and sisters, you'll never stop being tested. Not me, not you.

So much depends on whether we pass the test or not. We see people roaming the streets today without jobs because they never passed the test. They never took their school and college seriously.

And we see other people, half their age, who are earning such high salaries because they took their studies seriously. That's in the world. The same thing happens in the Christian life.

You see, fine people come, gripped by the message in the church, and God's begun to use them mightily. And there are others who sit for years and years and years and years. They're always backsliding and coming back, and some bitterness and some complaint, and then they repent and they come back.

And it's forever and ever and ever like that. They drown, they get up, they drown, they get up. Shall we finish with that? Press on.

Let's pray.

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