

O God, our help in ages past and our hope in ages to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home. Time like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away, they are all forgotten as a dream but, Lord, You are from everlasting to everlasting and this morning, O Lord, we just want to acknowledge, O Lord, that You are God who is absolutely in control of every situation in our lives. O Lord, we just want to thank You this morning, O Lord. We thank You. We acknowledge, O Lord, that You are God and there is no other. O Lord, this morning, we just come to You. We humbly beseech You that You would speak to us this morning. We have come to Your house, O Lord, even to take part, Lord Father, of the Lord's table. I pray, Father, that You'd prepare our hearts, that we would prepare ourselves, we will examine ourselves and, Lord, that You'd speak to our hearts even as we meditate upon Your Word. Speak to us, O Lord. Grant us hearing ears, O Lord, willing hearts to obey, give us concentration, give us discernment. Have mercy, O Lord, this morning on each one of us. Have mercy upon me even as I speak. Have mercy upon us even as we hear, O Lord, anoint us afresh. We don't presume upon Your presence, upon Your goodness, O Lord. We beseech that You would, Lord, come and speak to our hearts and anoint us and that You would, Lord, make Your Word real in our lives and it will become part of our inner man, the truth that You have for us this morning and therefore, I pray that You'd bless the speaking and the hearing of this word. I commit this time into Your hands. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

So, last Sunday, we were looking at Simon Peter and just look at one verse before we go into the meat of the message. Satan is asking permission.

Luke 22:31-32

³¹ And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift (all of you as wheat. Not just Simon Peter but all of) you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

And we saw how incredibly merciful the Lord is, that He has never given up on Simon Peter and He restores him. Thank God for His mercies and we heard and we learned the three steps of drifting away from the Lord and the three steps of coming back to the Lord. I just want to expand upon that. I want us to look at the fact that God is the One who allows testing to come in our lives. Allows Satan; He doesn't tempt us but He allows testing to test us, to crush us, to prove us, to take away our confidence in our own strength, in our own abilities, in our own talent. Everything that we put our trust in God wants to shatter that. I heard a saying by A.W Tozer. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply. That is remarkable, isn't it? Until God hurts us deeply, He will not bless us greatly. Look at another man. He says, "I don't easily trust men who don't walk with a limp." Who walked with a limp? Jacob, and he says, "I don't trust people easily, especially people who are so confident in their own strength and if they are not walking with a limp, I don't want to be around them because they are so sure, they've got it all figured out. They've put everything together. God has to test us, God has to prove us and today, I've titled my message as "Examine – Prove – know". Three steps. See, the threes, right?

We are in the third month, the last Sunday of the previous month, we looked at three steps away from God and three steps towards God and we looked at threes. I mean, the Bible is full of threes by the way – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – the Trinity – The Word, Jesus and the Spirit. Bible is full of threes and one of the threes I want to look at is, examine, proof and know and traditionally, if you know the main line calendar, we are in the month of lent where people are on a forty day fast and some forced, some religious and some really from the bottom of their hearts do it. I mean, it's good if you are doing it. There is nothing wrong there and subjecting themselves to a personal examination and I want to look at a particular verse in the Bible from which I get this title and we know this verse very well. It is found in *2 Corinthians 13:5*. Remember this verse very well?

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

Examine! Prove! Know!

You see, the three things coming here. Examine, prove, know. Three steps, just to get the flavor as to what is going on. Let's look at a few other translations to get an understanding of what this picture is all about. This is in the NIV translation

⁵ ***Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith;*** (Okay, this is a constant thing because in the last days many will fall away from the way, there will be an incredible apostasy coming) ***test yourselves.*** (In our school, what we call as a self-test before they take the final exam. Every student has to take the self-test. So, test yourself) ***Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?***

That is NIV. Another place

⁵ ***Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!***

So, what are the three steps? First, examine myself, not my neighbor, not my wife, not my children. Not my boss, not my Pastor – myself. That is what we call as a self-test. Then, prove myself. That is a very interesting word. There is a word in the Greek from which we get the word 'document'. It's dokimos. Dokimazo: to prove. I'll tell you where this is used. In the earlier days when they use to make vessels of clay or even of gold, what they will do is that they will put a whole vessel through fire and if it came through fire, the maker or the potter would put a seal underneath the vessel and he would say, "Dokimos" meaning – tested, proved. Document, from which we get the word document the results. Examine yourself, prove yourself. In other words, do a self-examination and if you have a piece of paper, document the results and then, know yourself and what should be the end result of this? To see if you find who? Jesus there, where? Inside of us. Three steps – examine myself, prove myself, know myself and if I see Jesus, then, I'm not disqualified and in some measure, not that we will completely come to maturity. No, at least in some measure and growing hopefully. Let me tell you something, God is not in a hurry. We may be in a hurry but God is working at His time.

C.S Lewis made a very fantastic statement. He said, "It is easy to please God but very hard to satisfy Him." That's a powerful statement. It is easy to please God but very hard to satisfy Him. When He created the world, He said, you spoke the things and said, "Let there be light!" and he says, "When He saw the light, He examined the light. Okay, this is good." And then, He separated the light from darkness and He said, "Good!" He examines His own work and then, He goes to the second day, He doesn't say anything about it. Third day He created something, he examines it and says, "Okay, good!" And then, He goes to the fourth day, examines and He says, "Good!" and the fifth day and the sixth day until He creates man and after that, He finishes everything He says, "Very good!" Unless every part is good, He will not declare the end product as very good and God is a God of detail. He sees and let me tell you honestly. If you are a Christian and if you are genuine believer and you really want to worship God truly from the bottom of your heart, He will allow you to be subjected to every test possible to prove you, to test you. Easy to please, hard to satisfy and He is not in a hurry.

I remember when I was in the university. Are there chemistry student over here? How many of you do titration? Pharmacy students will know what I'm talking about. Yes, there you go. I'll tell you what a titration is. It is basically to examine the amount of gold or amount of pure gold in a particular metal. They would do what we call as a titration. So, how they do it, they would take the thing which they want to examine, put it in a flask, put some alkali (sodium hydroxide) and then they start doing the titration. After a while, the color of that material changes, to know that that particular material you're looking for in present and the change is very minute. And what this guy is supposed to do is that, at that time you stop pouring and slowly, take his pipette and drop by drop, he has to let the testing liquid go into the thing being tested, until the whole thing turns to show that that particular metal is present. I was in my chemistry lab and most of the time, the lab instructor knows better. You know the lab instructor, the guy who helps us with our burettes and our pipettes and our circuits. That fellow knows better. The professor will say, "You do this and you will get the result." So, we are in a hurry. We want to finish everything. So, what do you do? You put the alkali, and you put the indicator and acid in the burette and you start pouring and before you know it, you miss that point and you never even test it and my lab instructor will come and say, "Why are you pouring, pouring, pouring?" Pour, pour and pour except you do that, you will not find that particular metal in that mixture. But we know we are in a hurry. You want us changed. God, today, I want to finish everything. God says, "Hang on! Slow process please. It's going to take a while." Forty years in the wilderness, twenty years, it depends upon the kind of guy you are. The more stubborn you are, the stronger and the longer the test will be. God is not in a hurry. Can we all say that? "God is not in a hurry." Because when you are young, especially, "I want to be in the mission field. I want to

Examine! Prove! Know!

finish this. I want to finish that.” Hold on. Hang in there, please. Take it easy, take a deep breath etc. You see, God is not in a hurry. Therefore, He has to prove us. He has to test us and therefore, we’ll look at certain tests in the Bible to see how we can know how we are being tested and to see whether Christ is really there in us and first of all before we go there, we want to see, why the test? There is one man who was tested like crazy in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. What is his name? Job. Everybody knows Job. Look at what it says. This guy is going nuts. He is going through this intense trial and this is what he has to cry out. He says in *Job 7:17-19*,

Job 7:17-19

¹⁷ ***What is man that You magnify him, And that You are concerned about him,*** (when you read this verse and you say, “O, God is concerned about me,” but read the next two verses. You know why he’s crying out.) ¹⁸ ***That You examine (test) him every morning And try him every moment?***

Do you know God is testing you even now, even as you sit in the house of God) He comes to examine you? It is a revelation and he’s like, “Lord, why do You test me every moment?” The next verse, actually, he says, “Give me a break!”

¹⁹ ***Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, Nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?***

“Lord, can You just give me a break, please? You are always looking at me. What is this? Just take care of Pastor James for a while. Just let me go, or take care of somebody else. Let me go. Just take Your eyes away from me. Give me a break.” I think I mentioned this some time back. This grandson goes to his grandfather and he says, “Why does Jesus always look at me, Grandpa? Why is He saying, ‘Be careful little eyes what you see’? Why? Because your Father up above is looking.” Why, does He not have any more children? The grandfather being a wise man says, “Honey, Jesus loves you so much that He can’t take His eyes off you.” That is the answer from the grandfather. But you know what we say, “Why me!” How many of you say that? Lord! Why am I going through this? Why me, why me?

I remember a story told by this guy who is going in the New York subway. New York subway, by the way, is not like Hyderabad subway. When you compare Hyderabad subway and New York subway, it is a bullock cart. New York subway, once you get in, it’s zooming at almost ninety miles per hour sometimes. So, this guy, eats something in the afternoon, at the office and gives him a stomach upset and he had to go home. So, he gets into the subway and during rush hour, New York subways are packed. I’ve been to all these subways. I’ve been to Montreal subway, Toronto subway, New York subway, Chicago subway, Frisco subway and I found New York subway one of the most crowded and the dirtiest. So, this guy is going back home during the rush hours. So, he stands in the line, it’s a packed station and he is in the last. So, what happened, he is in the last. What happened? The train comes, the doors open, he goes, stands, squeezing himself to the door and the door just closes like that. If you’ve been in the metro, you’ll know what I’m talking about. And then, he’s already having a stomach upset, he also has motion sickness and he had a lunch, it’s not digested and this train is going at ninety miles an hour. Now, his stomach starts to churn, the train keeps on going and stops at a next packed railway station and there’s this guy who is ready to get into the subway and this fellow can’t hold it anymore and the door opens, he vomits the whole things and his entire lunch is emptied onto that fellow’s face. Two seconds the door closes, back in ninety miles per hour and the guy was shocked and you know what he says, “Why me, Lord?” Of all the people, I should be the first and look, is this a coincidence or what? It’s as if You planned this whole thing that this fellow has to empty his lunch unto my face. And that is exactly how job is feeling. “Lord! Why me, Lord? Why are You testing me, Lord? Why the test?” *Job 1:6-7*, you will get the idea.

Job 1:6-8

⁶ ***One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.*** ⁷ ***The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?”***

Isn’t it interesting, I just want to stop here and Derek Prince gives a fantastic exposition over here. He says, “The angels, that is sons of God as the angels, have come to present themselves to the Lord and satan also came along with them and the fact of the matter is, none of the sons of God recognized satan. He’s like the angel of light, right? Nobody recognizes that’s how he comes. Sneaky, he’s sneaky all the time. That which is crooked cannot be made straight.

⁷ ***The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?”***

Satan answered like a railway man. "Up and down, to and fro. Up train, down train." That is exactly, the description of Satan. That is the description of people who have no other work but to be busy about other people's matters. Up and down to and fro. And then he asks this question

...Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." ⁸ Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?"

I mean, Job has no idea what is going on, in the cosmic realm. It is a cosmic experiment that is going on and he is the guinea pig. And you will many times be the guinea pig. Any time we have a new course in the university, we test the first batch and the first batch is the guinea pig. Somebody is laughing, they know what I'm talking about. Ah, what is this all about? That is exactly what is going on and Job is completely oblivious to the drama in the cosmic realm and let me tell you honestly, there is a war going on in the cosmic realm over each one of you. That is the reason why Pastor is about the minds being blinded. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but other translations we wrestle with this word. We do not wrestle with persons with bodies. The cosmic battle that is going on for every soul if you have come to the Lord to destroy your destiny and if you've not come to the Lord, to stop you from coming to the Lord. That is the reason why it says, "The god of this world has blinded the eyes." That is the reason why pastor is encouraging sisters, especially, to pray for the next generation. We're completely oblivious. God says, "Do you see My guy there? My boy! My Job?" I like that. "Do you see My Job?" Whenever sister Ailsa sees Eric, she's like "My Eric!" You see, that's the endearment you get. That's the picture. You see My Job over here!

Job 1:8-9

⁸ Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, (He's doing a comparative analysis here,) a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (And Satan says, "Yeah. Yeah yeah. I know.) ⁹ So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

Whenever I hear people talk about somebody else, I want to hear them very closely. First, there is a neutral statement and then, there's a negative statement. Pastor was talking about Mephibosheth. "Can you find me somebody from the house of Jonathan to whom I can show favor?" Ziba says, "Ah! There is a guy. His name is Mephibosheth. But he is lame." You see. "But he is this! But his English is not good. He's not very educated. He's not cultured." What have you! I know a guy has no envy when he is absolutely from the heart able to speak positive things about somebody else. From his heart. Not just to show off. All right. So, does Job fear God for nothing?

¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

And you know the story: this drama which is unfolding. Test after test. And Job is crying out saying, "What's going on, Lord?" But in the middle of it all. He recognizes something is going on.

Job 24:8-10

⁸ "Look, I go forward, but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; ⁹ When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. ¹⁰ But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall (What?) come forth as gold.

Now, tell me something, saints – do you have the confidence today that if God were to test you, that you would come forth as gold? Forget about, I don't think many of us will go through the kind of testing that Job was subjected to. God was showing the worst-case scenario, in other words. But in our little sufferings, if God were to put you through a real testing, do you have the confidence that says, "Lord, test me. I shall come forth as gold,"? Do you have the confidence? And that is the reason why we come to the ministry of the Word of God to be constantly be washed by the water of the word and to align our lives to the truth of the Word of God so that one day, we will not be ashamed. And you'll say, "Lord, I'm ready, Lord, for the next test. I'm ready." The Lord knows when you are ready. Don't be scared about surrendering that way. Let me tell you honestly. God will never allow the level of your testing to be more than your ability to withstand it. That's what

Examine! Prove! Know!

it says in *1 Corinthians 10*. So, don't worry about surrendering. What is the worst case? 'Chachchipotavu! ante kadaa?' (You'll die. Nothing much.) You'll die. In Telugu, it is called 'teginchadam'. It means you have completely sold yourself to God. Then, he says,

Job 28:12

¹² ***I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.***

Boy! This is confidence, saints! Think about it – if a man in the Old Covenant who is ranked among the top three – Moses, Daniel, Job. Am I right? Job. Daniel. Moses. Yeah? Three were the most righteous men in the Bible. This guy he can have this kind of confidence, then how much more you and I in the New Covenant? If the greatest among the New Covenant is John the Baptist. And then God says, "The least in the Kingdom of heaven has got the capacity to be greater than John the Baptist." How much more you and I?

So, that is the test – to see if we really adhere to His commandments. That is the reason why neither circumcision matters, nor uncircumcision matters, but faith expressing itself through love.

Another place. *1 Corinthians 7*. You don't have to turn there. Neither circumcision matters nor uncircumcision, but keeping of the commandments of God. That is the reason why we go through a test. This is confirmed by Peter in the New Testament and James.

1 Peter 4:12

¹² ***Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;***

1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶ ***In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ***

Faith everywhere, every time, has to be tested so that we have the assurance.

James 1:2-3

² ***Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith*** The same word – documos – to prove, to see that God has approved you) ***produces steadfastness.*** (That's what Paul will tell Timothy. Study to show yourself approved unto God a workman that needeth not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.)⁴ ***And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in (what?) nothing.***

Perfect, complete, lacking nothing. The picture is hang in there. You're going through a test? Hang in there. In order to prove and to test ourselves, we'll look at a particular Old Testament character. And we'll go through his life, not in detail, but excerpts from his life. And we'll do one thing. What shall we do? First, we will do examination. Testing. Documentation. And result.

What will you do? Everybody? Examination. Documentation. Result. Who's the character that I want to look at? Any guesses? Let's see. *Hebrews 11*. By the way, everybody in *Hebrews chapter 11* was tested. But I'm looking at one character today. Different excerpts in his life, not in detail. I'm not looking at Abel. I'm not looking at Enoch. I'm not looking at Moses. I'm not looking at Jacob. I'm not looking at Isaac. I'm looking at Abraham. So, let's look at what it says,

Hebrews 11:8

⁸ ***By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.***

That is what analysis is. Abraham went not knowing where he was going. That is just one statement. But you have to unpack it. And to see various stages in his life and what was tested. How he was tested? And we will examine ourselves and

Examine! Prove! Know!

see if we have the attitudes that he had or we don't have them it. Else, if we don't have it, we'll ask God. First thing which I want to look at is *Genesis 11:31*,

Genesis 11:31

³¹ And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. (They settled.)

And we know the reason because of who? Because of papa (father). 'Papa ne bol diya. Main rukh gaya.' (Father said. I stayed.) Papaji! Daddyji! Apni agna sur par..' I was trying to learn some Hindi from all the Hindi brothers that came. Look at how Stephen puts it in *Acts 7:2-3*,

Acts 7:2-4

² And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him (Not to Terah, but to him), 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' ⁴ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died (Until Terah dies, nothing is going to happen to his life.), God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.

I found in my experience two extremes. The two extremes which I'm going to talk about today. One extreme where the children will say, "I have to honour my father and my mother because it is the first commandment with a promise." Whatever my dad says goes or what my mom says goes or the grandfather or the head of the tribe. Whatever he says, goes and I have to honour him. There was one guy who was like that, who came to Jesus. He was one of the disciples who wanted to follow Jesus. Look at what he says.

Matthew 8:21

²¹ Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." (You know what Jesus says?)²² And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

What is He saying? The call is not for your father; it is for you. And if you put your father first, that is exactly how we find in our own cultures, especially patriarchal eastern cultures where the family comes first. You know the popular saying in telugu – "Maa inta vanta ila ledu. Hamara kaandhan main abhi aisa nahi hua! Great kaandaan baba!" God has a very nice way to say, "You are a brood of vipers. Don't say you are Abraham's children. You're a brood of vipers. Acknowledge that." Don't be proud about your pedigree. Only dogs have them. Let me first go! Young people are actually quiet. Do you really understand what is going on over here? You need to understand something. If you do not put God first, yesterday, Pastor was talking about this in our men's Bible study, the first commandment is, "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your strength." Then, the next commandment is after several steps, honour your father and mother. That is how the order is. You see, you cannot obey the law at one end and break the law at the other end. If you obey the law, you should obey the law at both ends. You should first have this conviction that you have put God first and then you honour your father and mother. Lot of people just pick and choose. James says, "If you have disobeyed in one element of the law, what has happened to you? You have broken the whole law." And people conveniently pick and choose the parts of the law they want to achieve, they want to adhere to and they conveniently forget the other parts of the law. You cannot just take one part of the law and forget the other part of the law. You have to apply it all the way. Let's see some interesting Old Testament examples. This is *1 Kings 19* when Elijah goes to mount Horeb,

1 Kings 1:15-20

¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.¹⁶ And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (Who called Elisha? Was it Elisha's choice? No. Elisha was God's choice and looks at what happens next.) **¹⁹ So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him,** (It's interesting! So, he's got twelve tractors in other words. He was riding one tractor.) **and he was with the twelfth.** (And he was directing the other tractors. That's the picture that is being shown here.) **Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon**

Examine! Prove! Know!

him. ²⁰ *And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again,(Read that again.) for what have I done to you?"*

You know what Elijah was telling? Elijah is telling Elisha, "I did not call you. If I were you, I would not choose you." In other words, you are God's choice. I didn't go to the committee and ask, "Second. Third. Fourth. Who's going to second this candidate and third this candidate?" I did not ask. It was God's choice. This is exactly what happens in mainline Churches. Suddenly, you will go to the youth meeting and you have this general body meeting which is going on. He'll say, "Vijay, get up! You will be the treasurer. How many of you second it? Third it? Fourth it?" Hello! You didn't even ask me. Elijah is telling Elisha, "Hey! It's not my thing to call you. It is God's call over your life. And if you want to go and kiss your father and mother goodbye, realize that I did not call you. God called you." You see, two extremes. And the other extreme. You want to see the other extreme? How many of you want to see the other extreme? Very interesting, the other extreme. This is *Mark 7*. It's also found in *Matthew 15*.

This is an interesting rendering in *Mark 7* in the ESV translation. Look at what it says.

Mark 7:5, 9-13

⁵ *And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"*

And Jesus answers a question by another question.

⁹ *And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! (So, how do you do it? Look at what it says.)* ¹⁰ *For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'* ¹¹ *But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)*

Kurban kar diya! Bhagwaan ko kurbaan kar diya."that is the reason why in Hyderabad we have the kurbaani ka meeta. Sabhi ko kurbaani ka meeta dedo. Kush. Kurbaan? It's the other extreme.

¹² *then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,* ¹³ *thus making void the Word of God by your tradition* (You have gone to the other extreme, wherein you think that you should not take care of your father and mother when they grow old. See?) *that you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Therefore, there is a principle. So, you have to examine yourself today. Abraham was subject to the Terah test. What test? The Terah test. There's one principle.

Ephesians 6:1-3

¹ *Children, obey your parents* (where? Only) *in the Lord,*(what is that?) *for this is right.* ² *"Honor your father and mother"* *(this is the first commandment with a promise)*

And if they say something which contradicts the Word of God or dishonors God, you have the right to disobey them but still be honorable in your disobedience. That is the principle. And Jesus personifies that, right? That's why we have the attitude of Christ inside of us when we have been subject to the Terah test. What does Jesus do?

Matthew 12:48-50

⁴⁸ *But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"* ⁴⁹ *And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"* ⁵⁰ *For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

Clear! That is one end. He keeps putting My Father first and then comes everybody else later. But does he forget that? No. Look at what it says in *John's Gospel 19:26-27*,

John 19:26-27

Examine! Prove! Know!

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

You see how He balances the two? Do we have this mind of Christ inside of you? Let me ask you this question, my dear brothers and sisters, young daughters-in-law to be, if your mother-in-law and father-in-law will come to your home when they grow old, do you have the Christ in you to love them unconditionally? When I saw the devotion in the morning, I was stunned. I said, “Lord, it’s a confirmation of Your Word today.” How many of you read the devotion in the morning when it came on WhatsApp?

...“Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

You see the Terah test? How good are we doing in our Terah test? Some people, “I can’t stand my mother-in-law.” It’s very subtle. “I can’t stand your mother.” Ask yourselves this question today, daughters-in-law, would you extend? Are they going to be your people? That’s what Ruth said, “Your God, my God; your people, my people.” Examine yourself today.

Second test – I call it the ‘famine test’.

Genesis 12:4-5, 7, 10

⁴ So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. ⁵ Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, (where? At the place they were not supposed to stop. That’s the point here,) and they departed to go to the land of Canaan...

Then, what comes next? The next test,

⁷ Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the Lord,

Thank God he builds altars and comes back to the Lord whenever he messed up but I’m looking at the next test,

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

He comes out of Haran; he’s got all these possessions; all these people, he had acquired, where? At the place where he was not supposed to stop and he comes and there is famine; there is lack and the test comes. Famine is a test, by the way. Church Swindoll, in one of his sermons, he says something about this age. He uses two interesting acronyms. He says, “We live in the age of DINC and OINC.” What is that? DINC and OINC. Two acronyms. OINC is not that of the pig, by the way. It’s an acronym. Let me tell you what those acronym stands for. DINC stands for – Double Income, No Children. So, now, guess by induction, what should OINC stand for? One Income, still No Children. We don’t want people to interfere in our lives. I was in the category of the DINC – Double Income, Not Yet Children. I didn’t say ‘no children’. Not yet children. I was so concerned; I am using euphemisms – ‘concern’ is a very mild term. When we had Abigail, seven years now, and Jacinth made a decision; she said, “I think I have to quit the job and take care of Abigail.” She has got a very interesting way of putting it. She says, “Can you just look at her, Vijay? Just look at her. Do you want to leave her with somebody?” I said, “But you know, double income. We come under the double income bracket.” I’ll tell you why I was resisting that. I was saying, “So many other people are working. Come on. Just another few more years before I settle down, until I have replaced your income and put it in a fixed deposit.” That is how DINCs think. I didn’t want to graduate into – One Income No Children group. It was very difficult. She made the decision and she was doing a fantastic job. It was a tough decision. God had to test me. I’ll tell you why I did not want her to quit. Honestly, at the bottom of my heart, I was used to a lifestyle and I did not want the lifestyle to come down. I didn’t want that to come down. She said, “We will manage.” I said, “Come on. Look at the cost of living. Economics telida neeku (don’t you know the economics)?” But the problem was not the economics; the problem was the heart. Heart which had so many possessions which were gathered in Haran and that has to be somehow maintained.

One of the things that Pastor mentioned, I think the wisest statement he made on the wedding for me to Joanna and Eric was this – “Eric, Joanna, keep life simple.” What did he say? “Keep life simple and you will have no problems to your marriage, almost to that effect.” He didn’t say, “No problems.” To that effect. He said, “Use the KISS principle.” Not the kissing; you know what ‘KISS’ stands for? It’s another acronym – Keep It Simple, Stupid. Take your life and keep it simple. Don’t acquire possessions. And you know what will happen? In order for you to maintain your standard of living, you will start compromising on the closest of relationships and you will not even hesitate to sell your wife. That is what I call the ‘famine test’. Question: in the famine test, will we put God first during the famine? Ask yourselves this question.

There is an interesting, you know this very well. We’ve studied this several times. I just want to draw a principle out of this.

Genesis 26:1-2

¹ There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. ² Then the Lord appeared to him and said: “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.

In other words, just don’t go. Just don’t compromise.

Genesis 26:12-13

¹² Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. ¹³ The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous;

I like this. This is one of the most fantastic verses in the Bible.

¹³ The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous;

It’s a triple superlative. And we try to look at that and think that it will be okay and you know what God is actually saying? He says, “When seed is most precious to you, will you be willing to sow in the land of famine?” In other words, will you put God first in every area of your life, especially when you are going through a bleak period in your life? I got this principle. In the New Testament, there is another lady who does this. This is found in *Luke 21*,

Luke 21:1-4

¹ And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, ² and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. ³ So He said, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;

You know how God sees it and how we see? She has put in everything. Do you know what God is actually saying?

⁴ for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.”

What does it mean? He is actually telling – her lifestyle is so simple that even if she puts everything into the offering back, she will still survive and she has no problems in putting God first. And I’m sure some of them heard it in the temple. They all hear when Jesus makes statements and they all heard it. So, they make the next statement,

Luke 21:5-6

⁵ Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations,

That’s one of the things that the Mainline Churches do. I’m not against them. One of the Mainline Churches which I was a part of, during building project, every Sunday, there is a report and they are literally spanking the congregation for money. They will say, “We put your name on the brick also. We will put your name on the pew.” Go to some Mainline Churches, “Donated by so-and-so, in memory of so-and-so.” That’s exactly what they think – donations. And you know what Jesus says? “You see donations?”

Examine! Prove! Know!

He said, ⁶ “These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.”

Question: do we keep our life simple so that we have more to give away to God. Do we have a frugal lifestyle? It's very important, saints. We live in an age of indulgence – DINC and OINC. Double Income, to really go counterculture, that is going to be a test for you guys where you put God first.

How are we doing there? *Genesis 13*. Thank God he comes back.

Genesis 13:1, 4

¹ Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.

⁴ to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

How are you doing in the famine test, saints? Some of you are going through a test of your life. Is God the God of your money, of your time, of your resources? Does the Kingdom of God come first? Have you put everything like Jesus? No strings attached. Everything, Lord, belongs to You.

Third test.

Genesis 13:7-9

⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. ⁸ So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. (And then, what happens?) ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.”

What is this test? I'll tell you what this test is. This is the test where the spiritual man serves the carnal man. That is the principle. Look at the principle. It is found in *1 Corinthians 11:18-19*,

1 Corinthians 11:18-19

¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

And there was strife. And those people who have God's approval, do you know what they will do? They will say, “Okay, fine. Strive there. Let us take the stand of Abraham where we are willing to serve the carnal man.” Isn't it interesting? Remember when Esau, after Jacob has his encounter with God at Peniel and finds the face of God and after God breaks his limb, he is running to Esau. And tell me, what happens? Before he meets Esau, he does something. What does he do? Of course, he does... and what does he do? He falls flat on his face before Esau, how many times? Seven times. He just goes prostrate. It is a very fantastic number where you will see the guy who is absolutely carnal being served and honored by the guy who is spiritual. Do you find this principle in the Bible? I find it everywhere. Look at what it says in *John 13*. This is the absolute spiritual man and who is that absolute spiritual Man. Jesus Himself. Look at how He serves the carnal man who is fighting for positions of honor and authority,

John 13:1-6, 12-14

¹ Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, (See, everything against Him. One of the guys want to kill Him. Look at what He does,) ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

And you know what? Peter makes a statement, right? What does he say?

⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, “Lord, are You washing my feet?”

He says,

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.

And especially, if you think that you are the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, you wash the feet of the carnal among you. That is the principle.

You need to understand, in every house, there are people who are being tested and they are being tested every moment. There will be a conflict – every home, whether it be a single nuclear home and be an organization or a Church. Every home will have conflict and in the conflict, do you know what is going on? God is testing to see who is the spiritual man and who is going to be a carnal man and He sees the divisions. Those who have God’s approval will stand up and say, “Let me wash the feet of the carnal man.” How does this principle work in our lives in our daily lives? At work. How many of you have carnal bosses? I have one. Some of you already said, “I have,” for sure. I had one. You had one? Look at what he says,

1 Peter 2:18-21

¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

That’s exactly what He did. He said, “I am absolutely spiritual but I have no qualms in washing the feet of the carnal man.” That’s exactly what Paul says. “When you have disputes about property, you go to the courts, are you not ashamed? Don’t you see Gentiles are watching you?” And what will you say? If you are really a spiritual man and if there is a conflict over property, what will you say? I’ll tell you the story of my mentor, Shibu. I tell you, that man was really a man of God. He taught me so many things. There was an issue of property in his home. There was one document which he had to sign because he was also one of the heirs of the property and that was against the law. Everybody in the family signed and Shibu was very upset and he didn’t want to do it and the father came and he said, “Shibu, come on. Everybody is done this. You don’t want the property, right? Why don’t you just sign it?” He came under pressure and just signed it. After a while, his conscience was pricking him. And he understood that if he signed, he had to pay of Rs. 25, 000. And he was not very well off those days. And his conscience was pricking him and he said, “Lord, I want to have my conscience straight with You. I don’t care of those guys get the property. Let them take my property but I don’t want to have anything to do with it.” He paid the Rs. 25, 000 and he got himself off the property. You make decisions like that, people in your own households will start fearing God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in Him. Now, because you have a different standard altogether. There is a conflict – “Take it and go. I don’t even want it. I have mansions in Heaven.” How many of you have that kind of an attitude where you say, “Lord, I have already made a choice.” Those choices are not made when the conflicts come; the choices are made today when, in your heart, you have severed all ties and said, “Lord, I am not living for property, if there is ever a property dispute and if the carnal man wants to have it, let him go. I want to be clear with You.”

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness...

That is my motto. That is what the carnal test is. Thank God he passed the test, right? Can you imagine how he passed test? Not only did he pass the test, he goes and rescues an unthankful, ungrateful nephew. He not only rescues him, he intercedes for him. That is amazing. Okay. So, how are you doing in the carnal test, In the ‘spiritual man serves the carnal man test’? Do you find Jesus Christ in you? Or do you say, “Lord I don’t want to anything of this world”? Where your treasure is, there your heart is. No mansions on earth, mansions in heaven.

Examine! Prove! Know!

Next, *Genesis 16*, this is difficult test. This is after the Abraham given the promise

Genesis 16:1-4

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. ³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. ⁴ So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

There is one principle you need to understand; that is what we call as 'the law, spiritual laws'. What is the principle?

Galatians 6:7-9

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption...

Even if he is a spiritual man, God is not going to change it; even if he is the God's anointed or if he has God's favour over his life, He is not going to change that law, that is the law. You see, you don't break the law of gravity. The law of gravity breaks you. See, you don't break the law, the law breaks you; you need to understand – these are the principles in the Kingdom of God. So,

...but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good...

Meaning? It's is not happening, let me help God, act carnally. Look at what it says in Romans chapter 8:6.

Romans 8:6, 12-13

⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the (principle)

F.B. Meyer is the famous theologian. He made a very powerful statement in one of his books; F.B. Meyer, at his poetic best, look at what he says,

"This is the bitterest of all – to know that suffering need not have been; that it has resulted from indiscretion and inconsistency; that it is the harvest of one's own sowing; that the vulture which feeds on the vitals is a nestling of one's own rearing. Ah me! This is pain!" - F.B Meyer

You know what it means in Telugu? I need to explain it, *paamuni intlo penchukunnadu*. Someone wanted to pet a snake and made him drink milk and over a period of time, that fellow is grown bigger and bigger and I have seen so many cases in the United States where people have snakes as pets – pythons as pet; I can't imagine. You remember when Paul and Silas, they were in Philippi where this lady with spirit of divination, this is spirit of divination, "These are the servants of the Most High God." (Acts 16:17) listen to him." The spirit of divination. You know what the word 'divination' stands for? The word 'divination' in the original Greek is python. The spirit of divination. You know what the python is? It's one thing which coils around its prey and it slowly; it is very painful slow death where it crushes you gently takes out the breath from out of your lungs and you die slowly. That is the python spirit. And you what he is saying? There is inside each one of us a carnal man which was born of the devil which if you do not kill it every day of your life, slowly, it will curl around you, curl around you and curl around you and he says, "that the vulture which feeds on the vitals is a nestling of one's own rearing. Ah me! This is pain!" Even in your own life, you sowed in the flesh and you are reaping the harvest. You said that pet-sin, "It's okay," and you okayed it and now, you don't even have the capacity to say 'no' because it has literally taken the life out of you slowly. It's amazing how in the United States, there was one pastor who had vipers in his congregation among in his Church and that viper bit him and he died; and it was a National news and the whole world is laughing at a Pastor, because you know what? They said, "What kind of stupid guy is this and what kind of a God are they worshiping; what kind of a god who allows them to have pythons?" Think about it.

You know there is a huge problem in Florida these days, in the state of Florida where they have got all these pets, python pets from Indonesia and there are huge pythons, there are literally gobbling up the entire wild life of Florida; and they have to bring the snake catchers from India to catch all the pythons there. You have called them as pets in your own homes and you think they are going to be pets? Python is going to be a pet? Have you seen the movie Anaconda? I mean, have you seen an Anaconda live on National Geographic Channel? How deadly it is! Boy, and you think it is going to be okay? That's what he is saying; then he says continues "There is an inevitable nemesis in life (You have a nemesis in your own heart) the laws of the heart and home, of the soul and human life, cannot be violated with impunity. Sin may be forgiven; But the consequences will follow." That's exactly what happened to Abraham. He was nestling a vulture in his own home and six thousand; almost five thousand years later, still, consequences of his action are being experienced by the entire world. You know, isn't it interesting? When something is going on Rebekah's womb, she goes to God and say, "What is going on, Lord?" What does the God say? "Two nations. Boss, you thought it was only a child who's going to be born; it is going to be a nation which is going to be a thorn in your flesh." A nation which is a product of your own nestling, which is going to feed on your vitals. And that is the spiritual principle, saints, which you cannot escape, my dear brothers and sisters, things of the flesh. You know your weakness. Stay accountable. Stay in the Church.

One brother came and asked me, "Vijay, how do you manage to not given to the flesh, especially when you have arguments at home?" You know what I say? I rehearse the consequences. You want to get into an argument? You know where it is leading – if you win, you lose. You understand, right? This goes to the next step and then, the next step. It is deterministic. Nothing random in the Kingdom of God. You go to that step and you ask yourself, "Do I want to be there?" And then, you back calculate. "No, no. It's not worth it now." Rehearse the consequences of your decisions before you make them, my dear brother and sisters. Rehearse the consequences, "If I take up this job, what will happen to my spiritual life?" Rehearse the consequences of that decision. If this happens, you know, God have given us a brain and some wisdom. "if I take this career, what will happen to me? If I take this job, what will happen to me? If I marry this person, what is going to happen to me?" God has clearly showed us, what is going to happen to you – every scenario possible. If you seek Him, you will find Him. Rehearse the consequences and see if you really want to be in that condition.

You see when a spiritual man acts carnally, God is not going to say, "Okay, he is My Abraham. I will let him go." No. Even for His Own Son, He is not going to let that go. See, one of the consequences, especially sexual sin which is the like the most powerful in this generation.

Proverbs 5:7-14

⁷ Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth (this is talking to the children who is from the adulterous woman) **⁸ Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,** **⁹ Lest you give your honour to others, and your years to the cruel one;** (you would have wasted your life) **¹⁰ Lest aliens be filled with your wealth and your labours go to the house of a foreigner;** **¹¹ And you mourn at last, When your flesh and your body are consumed,** **¹² And say: "How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction!"** **¹³ I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!** **¹⁴ I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation."**

Irrevocable consequences of sexual sin; Irrevocable consequences. Make a decision today. That was the test that Abraham failed miserably. But you know what? Where Abraham failed, Jesus is going to win! He understood this. If I sow in the flesh, God is not going to make it easier for His Own Son, He came under the law, He was born under the law, born of a virgin, He was subject to the law, and He understood the consequences of every action that He was going to take. And therefore, you know what He did? This is what it says in *Hebrews 5*,

Hebrews 5:7

⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear

'Reverent submission' in the other translations. This is how a spiritual Man, if you have really the Christ in you, you will say, "Lord, lead me not in the temptation." That is one of the prayers that Pastor keeps on praying with us, "Lord, lead us not

Examine! Prove! Know!

into temptation but deliver us from the evil one, every day of my life. Lord, help me because I don't know. I am not strong. I don't have any confidence in my flesh. I don't want to subject myself to test wilfully."

1 Peter 4:1

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin

Arm yourselves. These decisions, about your career, people whom you going to marry – everything is made today, not on the day when you are going to get tested; not on those days; Now! The decisions are made now. About your value systems, everything is made now; not then. You see.

And finally, the final test – *Genesis 22*. That's the pinnacle of Abraham, right? Thank God, that Abraham; God does not call the qualified; He qualifies those whom he has called. Thank God. It is not because we are so great and because we are so righteous that God called us, thank God, He is patient with us. *Verse 3 onwards.*

Genesis 22:3-5

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off (which day? On the third day, you see the third day, it the figurative sense) ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

That was not a wishful thinking, my dear brothers and sisters. This guy who have been tested and have proven by God, where he is now willing to put everything on the altar, even something which was closest to him which was of God – what I call 'the making of a worshiper'. Everything on the altar. Everything!

You know one of the reason why we fear? It is because we have not given everything to God. You know it. Everyone knows, every area where we have surrendered and where we have not surrendered. You know it. Everybody knows. At least intuitively, to a certain level you know it.

Genesis 22:9-10

⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Whenever I read this, I say – God is someone who is so interested in every one of our lives, when He documents the lives of the heroes in the Bible, He puts everything naked about their lives so that you and I will have hope. That is incredible about God.

There was this one king, I'm not sure of his name exactly. There was one English Emperor. He was a very nice guy. He was popular with the people. He was so popular and that one day, they said, "We want to make a portrait of you." He said, "You want to make my portrait?" They said, "Yes, we want to make your portrait." Then, he said, "When you make my portrait, show everything that is in my face – the dots, the blunts, the eyes, the squint – everything. Show as it is. Don't hide anything. Only if you do that, I will agree for a portrait. Otherwise, no." When people want to talk about somebody, you know how they nicely whitewash them and say, "Modi Sarkar zindabad"? But this man said, "Everything." That's exactly what God does. He puts the portrait just the way it is – with all their negatives, failures and failings; and yet, the work of God in their lives. That's amazing.

¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. (And you know the story. He was stopped.)

Genesis 22:13-14

Examine! Prove! Know!

¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

That's exactly what he did. Do you know how God was able to work in Abraham's life? Because God did it for Abraham and in that, He said, "I'm going to send My Son. He is going to die for you. He is going to take sin upon Himself. He is going to take the curse upon Himself. He is going to take your poverty upon Himself. He is going to take sickness upon Himself so that once He has done that work, you can be a complete worshipper." Look at what it says in *2 Corinthians 5:21*, one of my favorite verses.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Amazing. Another place.

Galatians 3:13-14

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

2 Corinthians 8:8-9

⁸ I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:5

⁵ And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

When you have experienced the forgiveness of God, when Abraham was asked to offer his son, he never argued with God because he understood. For his sin, somebody had to die. Because in those days, the firstborn represented the sin of the family. That's exactly what happened in Egypt. In every Egyptian's house, one of these two deaths took place – either the firstborn, representing the sin of the family, died or there was a lamb which died in place of the firstborn. So, Abraham never argued. He understood, "Lord, all the sins and the mistakes I have committed, somebody has to pay for it," and when you ask Him, "I know that I cannot argue with You but I know, Lord, intuitively, somehow, You will provide." You know what God did? He did provide – the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world so that we can be made true worshippers like Abraham. That is the reason why we come to this table every month.

Philippians 3:3

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

That's exactly what Abraham did. He submitted everything on the altar and he said, "Lord, all that I have, I give to You because You gave everything to reconcile me back to Yourself."

This morning, even as we come to the table, I just want to encourage each one of you – how are we doing in the Lot's test? In the parent's test? In the famine test? In dealing with carnal believers' test? I will tell you something about carnal things – you will be tested. In my own life, I know, in my own home, my children test me and when I go to GTLC, the students test me. Out of frustration, so many times, I said, "What is this?" Let me tell you something, children are there to test you. It's about you; it's not about them. So many. I'll tell you, so many people who work in organizations in NGOs, in other organizations – in orphanages, they get frustrated. Let me tell you, when you are getting frustrated, God is testing you. It's not about those people whom you are mentoring or teaching; it's about you, whether you will humble yourself and say, "Lord, it doesn't matter. How much You were patient with me, Lord. I will also be patient with them." How are we doing in serving the carnal people? How are we doing in that test? Do we find Jesus in us? Do you examine yourself every day in

Examine! Prove! Know!

your life? And how are we doing in our sin test? And how are we doing in offering everything on the altar when Jesus gave everything? This morning, even as we come to the Lord's table, let's examine ourselves. Take a few moments to examine ourselves.

You have heard the Word this morning. The Word of God is always good. It's always to give us our hope. Especially for the young ones, sitting over here, who is yawning. Remember, you have the greatest hope because you still haven't committed any of the blunders of Abraham; yet, you know the truth of Abraham. That's why Scripture says, "It is blessed to serve the Living God in the days of your youth," because you can learn from the mistakes of the ones who have gone before. Pastor Vijay was teaching us of the test. There is one test with which comes consequences. The first test – he lost a few years. The second test – maybe a few months and everything was restored. Every one of those tests, you will see, there is restoration. One test, consequences will follow till today. There was no way he could escape the consequences of that test. Think for a minute when he had to throw Ishmael out. That father is standing by the doorway of his tent, watching his eldest son walk away. He has been sent away and he cannot call him back. Listen to the cry of David, "Absalom, Absalom, I wish I had died in your place." That's why, young ones sitting over here, don't make that decision of that flesh. As Pastor Vijay said, "Decisions are made now." It's not made on that day. It's made now. You purpose in your heart now – I will not be yoked with an unbeliever. You make it now so that when you go to a day in your college, in your workplace, and when they make those beautiful eyes and pull those chairs for you and talk so kindly and give you flowers for your birthday, you will have written in your heart, "I will not yoke myself with an unbeliever. It doesn't matter how attractive she or he is." Decisions are made now. Otherwise, consequences follow. Young ones, that's what I have to tell you – be wise. The Word of God makes one wise. But God is a God of hope. He made many goof-ups but God calls Abraham, "My friend." Jacob made many mistakes but he finishes well but the models, we are always put forward in the Bible for young people is not Abraham; it's not even Isaac or Jacob. It's always Joseph and Daniel – two models who are kept. So, young ones sitting over here, pick your model from Joseph and from Daniel and say, "Lord, I have purposed in my heart to honor You and to obey You."

Closing Song: Here is Love Vast As the Ocean

For those of you who are kind of recent to the Church and those who are here for years, you know the way the pulpit functions, the Word you hear functions. See, when people come to Church, usually, they come with a problem and are looking for a solution and often, we do not cater to your problem. Instead, we have often tried to lead you to the Problem solver. You can either have a solution to your problem or you can have God. To know God, all these messages, you would see – its power lies in the application because when you apply it, Scripture says, "Blessed are the poor in heart for they shall see God." When Jesus walked on earth for thirty-three and a half, maybe years, starting with his parents down to his chosen Apostles, everybody experienced him differently. They didn't experience Him in the same way. Not even His twelve Apostles experienced Him in the same way. Experience is not the same. Even among the Apostles, there were three apostles alone who experienced Him differently. These three, He selectively took with Him to certain places. He didn't take the others with Him. And on the Mount of Transfiguration, only three – these three – were blessed to see Him as He was – Peter, James and John – these three. So, remember, experience is not the same. God would love to give everybody the same experience but He leaves it to us. All the messages you hear, the application of it, lies its power. The days will only go more and more difficult. Life will be full of problems. Job will say, "As the sparks go up, so is a man's life to trouble." Troubles are not going to go away. God shouldn't be far away. The whole purpose of the teaching of the Word of God is not that we become knowledgeable; it's that we really know God and experience God more and more because the Bible is all about relationships. The Cross talks about relationships – God has restored relationship with God and man; and God restores through Christ the relationship with man and man. And it is only possible through the Cross. The Cross is not something which you wear on the neck. It is an instrument of torture to the carnal man. Guard your relationships. One of the best ways to guard your relationship is by guarding your lips. Like he said, rehearse. What? The Word is interesting in English. If you take the 're' off, what do you have? Hearse. You know what a hearse is? That's where the dead body goes. A lot of people have dead stuff stinking in their lives, all of us, because we did not rehearse – if we went this way, where we would reach. So, we ended up with hearses. Think of the consequences. It's good to think.

I tell in the Church, two things that destroy a man or a woman – one is lack of knowledge, ignorance. Ignorance is terrible. If you do not know the truth, you will be destroyed simply because of the lack of truth. Second is – indiscipline. You need both – knowledge and discipline. Get these both in. Order your lives. God doesn't give discipline. You have to work at it. You have to acquire knowledge, to acquire knowledge, especially of the Word of God. Knowledge, understanding and wisdom is in

Examine! Prove! Know!

the application but it begins with knowledge. So, don't yawn when you hear the Word of God; ask God, "Let me understand what Pastor Vijay is talking about." Can you imagine a five-year-old understood everything God told him? Five or six-year-old and could come and repeat it to the priest the next day, "This is what the LORD said." He understood. To the men I was saying yesterday, the Jewish population is less than 1% of the entire world population. But you know what a believing Jew does when his wife conceives? As soon as his wife conceives, the believing Jew starts reading the Torah to that baby all the days of his life so that his mind is framed by the Word of God. That is why, even today, 75% of the Noble Laureates are Jews; not because of their skills in the secular place; it's because their minds were framed by God's Word. Heaven and earth will pass away; not a dot from this Word. If you want your child to get a Noble prize, teach him the Word of God. We spent thousands and thousands and millions, sometimes, educating our children in skills and I, yet, have to find a parent to engaged a tutor to teach his child the Word of God. That's why God says, "We honor Him with our lips but our hearts are far." That's why we make it a point to see that you all come here on Wednesday. We provide you the transport, the driver and the fuel. Better come here and sit down and listen. Even if you have exams on Thursday, I don't personally care. Wednesday night, listen to the Word of God; Thursday, you will do well. You will do well in life. Don't worry. He, who has the Word, has God. If you have God, you have to fear nothing and nobody in life. Amen? Shall we pray?

Closing Prayer:

Father, this morning, we just come to You. I just thank You, Lord. You do not test us that we may fail; You test us that You may approve of us. Help us to see You as our Father, the most loving Father. You will never allow a test that is beyond our strength to bear. You will never leave us alone in our test. Through all our tests, You will be there beside us. You have promised us that. And I pray, Father, in the light of the Word we have heard today, no one will struggle to pass this test in their own strength because it is not possible but they will lean on to Your strength. I pray, Father, we will guard our hearts, guard our thoughts, guard our words because relationships, O Lord, are built or broken by the words we speak ultimately. For it would take a lifetime to build a relationship which can be broken by one word. Three and a half years of ministering, mentoring and anointing, Judas lost it in one word when he went to the Jews and said, "What will you give me for selling Him out?" Once it was spoken, he couldn't take it back. Teach us to think deeply before we speak, think deeply before we react to our circumstances so that we see our life and our situations as ordered by You; that You are in control and You have allowed these things and if it is because we sowed in the flesh, I pray, we cease sowing, start repenting, start changing. We may not be able to change the consequences but we will definitely have the strength from above to bear the consequences and still finish our race well. I pray Your children, all of us, will go from Your house, determined in our hearts to lean on to You, to Your understanding, to Your strength and choose not only to please You but a day when we will be able to satisfy You, Lord. Thank You, Father. We just commit the rest of the day, the rest of the month into Thy hands and we pray, Father, teach us to walk before You and to be blameless in Your sight. I pray, Father, that You would bless Your people. You would meet them at their point of need; that You would cover them, protect them, and we would pray what You asked us to pray – Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the power of the evil one; for Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever, O Lord. Now, by faith, O Lord, we just lift up holy hands and we bless Your holy Name. Thank You, Father. Thank You, Lord. We praise You. We worship You. We glorify You. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen.