20261101 Genesis 26 – Isaac Digs Wells - Faithful Walking – Experiencing Blessing

26 *[1]Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. [2] And the Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. [3] Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. [4] I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, [5] because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." (Genesis 26:1-5, ESV).*

So, once again a famine came to the land and Isaac went to see Abimelech. Remember that this isn't a man's name, rather it is a title meaning "Father King." We are then told that the Lord appeared to Isaac, and He restated the covenant promises that He had made with Isaac's father, Abraham.

Isaac and Abimelech

[6] So Isaac settled in Gerar. [7] When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he feared to say, "My wife," thinking, "lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah," because she was attractive in appearance. (Genesis 26:6-7, ESV).

Isaac was afflicted with the same fear that Abraham had, motivating him to lie to Abimelech, king of the Phillistines. The real shocker is that having heard the promises directly from the mouth of God, Isaac responded in fear. This is the same Isaac that we studied last week who prayed faithfully for 20 years that his wife Rebekah would have a child. It reminds all of us how spiritually weak we truly are.

[8] When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife. [9] So Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought, 'Lest I die because of her.'" [10] Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." [11] So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death." (Genesis 26:8-11, ESV).

The Hebrew language makes it clear that Abimelech saw Isaac and Rebekah engaged in love play. I think this is a euphemism for the two being engaged intimately. Naturally Abimelech is upset because he feared the consequences if he had taken her as his lover or his wife. Isaac had called her his "sister" and avoided letting Abimelech know that she was his wife. As a reminder, she *was* his first cousin, one generation removed. That means she was the daughter of his first cousin.

12 And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him, 13 and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. 14 He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. 15 (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.) 16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we." (Genesis 26:12-16, ESV).

Obviously, God had his hand on Isaac and on his efforts. He was blessed and highly favored. Like his father before him, Isaac became very wealthy and his neighbors grew envious of him. Envy is a strange thing. It is born out of pride. A person will feel that they are more deserving of the fame, status, or prosperity that they see being poured out on someone that they feel is not as deserving. I think that is one of the problems in society today. People are told constantly that the rich are the problem and that if the possessions of the rich could be appropriated (taken by force), then everyone else would have more. That is a lie and is not the way things work. I want to add that this is not the way the economy works. (Economics was my first area of study.) Likewise, the text tells us that the Philistines were afraid of the power and influence that Isaac would have in their area. They saw him as a threat.





17 So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. 18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them. 19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, 20 the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So, he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. 21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah. 22 And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So, he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." (Genesis 26:17-22, ESV).

When reading in this passage concerning the wells being plugged and dug again, I think we are shown the extraordinary patience of Isaac. After Abraham's death, he went back and unplugged the wells that the Phillistines had plugged up. I think this shows us how illogical envy

is. People will often destroy something that another has (deriving no benefit to themselves). They just do it so the person who has it won't get to use it and enjoy it. As the Philistines successively claim any well that he progressively dug, Isaac finally dug one that they didn't contend for and names it Rehoboth which means "room." God had made a way for him when it seemed that all of his efforts were fruitless. This reminded me that often we might feel displaced by someone else, but if we trust the Lord and remain faithful, more often than not, God makes "room" for us. He blesses us in spite of the attempts of others to steal our blessing.



23 *From there he went up to Beersheba.* ***24*** *And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."* ***25*** *So* ***he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord*** *and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well. (Genesis 26:23-25, ESV).*

Here we are told that Isaac responded by building an altar and that he "called upon the name of the Lord." We hear this phrase often in the Bible, and I think it is an important concept. When a person "calls upon the Lord" they are invoking His name and His power, authority, and sovereignty in their lives. I'll get to that a bit more in a moment.

26 *When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army,* ***27*** *Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?"* ***28*** *They said, "We see plainly that the Lord has been with you. So, we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you,* ***29*** *that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the Lord."* ***30*** *So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.* ***31*** *In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.* ***32*** *That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, "We have found water."* ***33*** *He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day. (Genesis 26:26-33, ESV).*

This part of the text tells us that Abimelech went with his most important general, Phicol, and readily admitted that God was with Isaac and that they were desirous to enter into a peace treaty with him. It was on that same day that the workers came to Isaac and told him that there was a successful well that they had just dug, and they called it "Beersheba" (meaning Well of Oath or Well of Seven). He received news of the prosperity of the well as he was entering into an oath with Abimelech.

34 *When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite,* ***35*** *and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah. (Genesis 26:34-35, ESV).*

We are then told that Esau took a wife from the Hittites. This made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah. It reminds us that Esau "despised his birthright" and all of the blessings that accrued to having the same. He was disinterested in spiritual things, and he disdained the thought of living a life submitted to Almighty God.

So, what can we summarize and garner from this text today. Paul tells us that even stories like this are "for our instruction;" so what can we learn? In **Romans 15:4** Paul writes, "*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*" (ESV).

1 Often we go through a period of darkness before there is a breakthrough. There was a severe famine prior to God revealing His eternal plan to Isaac. Often we also experience darkness and difficulty before God reveals Himself and gives us a "break through." This isn't always the case, but it was in this account. I would remind you to never give up. Never surrender.

2 God is faithful to the covenant He made with Abraham even after his death. God keeps His promises. God is sovereign and is at work in this story and in our stories. He clearly passed the covenant made to Abraham down to his son Isaac. God keeps His promises. I think it's good to remember exactly what He promised to Abraham:

a. I will be with you. God's presence is the true security of every believer. We can feel hopelessly abandoned at times, but God has promised that He will never leave you or forsake you. It's hard to really believe that when you are in the midst of the fire, but it is a promise. You can take it to the bank.

b. I will give this land to you and your offspring. God made a promise to give the land that we know today as "Israel" to the Jews. It passed down from Abraham to Isaac in this story, and we will soon see that it passed then to Jacob who was renamed Israel by God. God's promises are eternal.

c. I will establish the oath with you that I made with Abraham. The blessings that God bestowed on Abraham were reaffirmed to Isaac. Isaac responded by making an altar and worshiping. It was then and there that he chose to "call upon the name of the Lord."

d. I will make your descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore. This promised passed through Abraham and now rested with Isaac. God restated it, and God reaffirmed it.

e. I will bless ALL the nations of the earth through your offspring. This of course is speaking about Jesus who came to earth and died on the cross for the sins of all of mankind. In that act, Jesus, the descendant of Abraham, has blessed the entire population of the earth with deliverance and salvation.

3 Isaac succumbed to his fear instead of walking in faith EVEN right after he had heard directly from the Lord. We do the same thing. In spite of our doubts and fears, He will never leave us or forsake us. Grace operates despite Isaac's failure (and our failures). Isaac receives a direct word from God and then immediately lies about Rebekah, repeating his father's earlier sin. And yet, God does not withdraw the blessing. This is nothing less than grace. He protects the couple through Abimelech and continues to prosper Isaac. This reminds us that God's covenant blessing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was rooted in God's grace and not human effort or performance.

4 Isaac exercised tremedous patience in dealing with his enemies. He just kept doing the right thing, and leaving the outcome up to God. We could learn much from Isaac about going the extra mile with people who create problems in our lives. He didn't ignore the problems. He just kept being extraordinarily gracious. We should do the same thing. Sometimes God gives us a special degree of "room" (Rehoboth) instead of having to contend for every blessing in our lives.

5 When God repeatedly promised to "be with Him," Isaac responded by building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord. The phrase "call upon the name of the Lord" is a loaded one. Hebrew: *qara beshem YHWH* / קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה) means to **proclaim, or cry out the name of YHWH**—publicly identifying with Him, worshipping Him, and seeking His presence or help. When a person does this, they are looking to God alone as their Lord and Master and as the solution to their problem - whatever it may be. ***Romans 10:13*** *says: For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (KJV).* ***Acts 2:21 says****: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (KJV).*

6 Obedience in remaining where God's desires for you to be brings fruit. It may not always be fruit like we can readily see, but it will be fruitful. Isaac is told to stay in the land rather than fleeing to Egypt. He planted in a time of famine and reaped a hundredfold "because the Lord blessed him" (Genesis 26:12). You and I might be called to "plant in a time of famine" but the Lord will bless our efforts.

7 Peace is often possible, even after hostility. The gospel can reconcile parties who are estranged. Abimelech, who had sent Isaac away, later sought a treaty with him because he saw God's hand on Isaac (Genesis26:26–31). Isaac hosted a feast, and they swore an oath to one another. Former opponents can become covenant partners when God's blessing becomes obvious and when they submit themselves to the possibility of reconciliation. Pride must often be buried to find reconciliation.

8 Family choices have lasting consequences. Don't get tied up with a partner who has a different mindset and value system. It will be disastrous. Esau went out and got a wife from the people in the land (think "the world"), and it caused much grief and misery for Isaac and Rebekah. He purposefully did this as an affront to his parents and as a dismissive act removing him from God's best for his life. Make the right choices!

Let us pray.

Big Ideas: Isaac inherited the promises God made to his father. God blessed him in spite of his fear and doubts. When he had done wrong, he just kept praying and moving forward. The end resulted in peace and blessings. We too are invited to trust God in the midst of the "famines" and "oppositions" that come into our lives. Walk in faith and not in fear. He will never leave you or forsake you.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.