

Text: Genesis 26:1-35

Title: Abrahamic Covenant Reiterated

Truth: Twice God re-states the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham's son.

Date/Location: Sunday April 2, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

In this chapter, God graciously promises the Abrahamic-covenant blessings to Isaac, despite his falling short of perfect faith.

I. Stay in This Land, v. 1-5

- A. There was another famine in the land (see Gen. 12:10 for the first one, at least 85 years earlier) so Isaac had to move around to find food for his family and his flocks. He landed in the region of the Philistines in Gerar. The king there was still called by the title Abimelech, just as decades earlier when Abraham went there. The Philistines were not as bad to Isaac as they later were to his offspring.
- B. God told him specifically to stay in the land and not go down to Egypt. This would lead to blessing—and not just any blessing, but the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant!
- C. God's promise had to do with land, blessing, and descendants; or as some say, "land, seed, and blessing." These are the same terms of the covenant which was introduced in Genesis 12, 13, 15, and 17. We do not live under the terms of that covenant, so we are not guaranteed land, a descendance, or blessing. We certainly can seek to be good stewards of what we do have and ask God for any of those things in our "small" corner of the world. We may in fact have to *leave* houses and lands and family for the sake of the gospel (Mark 10:29-30).
- D. God told Isaac not to go to Egypt. Instead, he was to trust the Lord to provide for him in the promised land. In the Bible, sometimes going to Egypt is done for safety or provision. Jesus was taken to Egypt as a baby. Jacob and the patriarchs went there to be saved from a later famine (Gen. 46:3). Other times, going to or relying upon Egypt represents disobedience and lack of trust in God. For example, Isaiah 30:1-3 and 31:1-3 criticize Israel because they

trusted in the political and military power of Egypt to be their salvation. God was going to go after them in chastisement. Yet He also would wait to be gracious and merciful to them (30:18).

Similarly in Jeremiah 36:6 says that some of the people of Israel trusted in Egypt, which is much different than trusting in God. Similarly, Jeremiah 42:14-19.

- E. God is telling Isaac that staying close to God and His land is how to receive a blessing. How about you and me? Do we “trust in Egypt” in our lives? Do we trust in the world instead of in God? Do we look to things, people, worldly solutions, humanistic philosophy, money, etc. to solve our problems? Or do we go to God?

II. Isaac’s Deceptiveness Revealed, v. 6-11

- A. Isaac repeated the sinful pattern of his father in lying about his wife. He was afraid that the Philistines would take his wife from him, so he lied. Do you wonder if the bad example of his father affected Isaac? You might astutely observe that those events happened in Genesis chapters 12 and 20, and Isaac was born in chapter 21. Therefore, that was past history by the time Isaac was old enough to process things. Yet you know in your own life that old stories sometimes come back to “haunt” you. When your kids learn that you did this or that, you may be afraid this may make them feel justified in doing the same foolish things you did. Of course, that is sinful reasoning on their part. But it is reality.
- B. Children sin independent of their parents because of their sin nature. But they can and do learn your bad patterns, priorities, etc. They learn them almost by osmosis because “that is how I grew up.” “That is the way we did things.” It did not seem very bad to them since it was “normal.” It seems possible that it is easier for our kids to learn our bad habits than our good patterns and priorities. Consequently, we must resolve to live right as we lead our families. Put on the breastplate of righteousness to protect yourself and help your kids start out well.

Side note: I caught a little problem in my earlier notes from 2006 on this portion of Scripture. I said that Isaac repeated the *mistake* of his father. That is true in a sense, but I argue with my

younger self: what he did is more than a mistake, because sin is more than a mistake. Making a mistake is one thing; “blowing it” is even bigger, although even that is sometimes defined as making a *big* mistake. But sinning is far worse. You can make a mistake on a math problem while you are learning in class, and it is not a sin. You can even “blow it” by missing some great opportunity in life. But that is not a sin necessarily either. Those are shortcomings of finiteness; they are *perhaps* impacted by our sinfulness in that we were too lazy to learn the material carefully, or we were not in tune with God’s wisdom. But when we sin, it is far worse: we offend God’s holiness. We put ourselves further into a debt-like situation to God. Better said, we add to our rap sheet—our crimes against God and humans. There is no remedy for this outside of a perfect-life-for-sinful-life substitution. My point in all this is to remind us that sin is *sin*—it is bad, far more than a mere mistake. Call it out as such in your own life.

- C. In this case, Isaac lacked faith, lived in fear, used his wife as a human shield, and deceived others to protect himself. He should have been bold in God because he knew the promise God had just given to him. He should have been a man and protected his wife. He should have lived in faith instead of fear. But survival was more important to him than fidelity to God. And that even though God had just told him about the blessing that were his.
- D. Isaac was found out when he was caught in a little “PDA” with his wife. By the way, there is nothing wrong with showing your spouse a little of that now and then. In fact, people—and your children—should see that you love one another, and that you live like you are married! Give your kids a wholesome view of love instead of what they get from society.
- E. Isaac stayed in the land, but he got away from God when he played this trick on Abimelech. It did not pay off. His distrust in God led to deceit toward others. This pattern was re-used by his son Jacob.
- F. I was interested to note that God induced the pagan king Abimelech to issue a very harsh penalty for anyone who messed with Isaac or Rebekah. God was protecting His people using a

pagan! See Psalm 105:8-15. This reminds me when I was in early elementary school of my powerful 5th grade friend :-) who was a help even though not a Christian.

III. The Blessing of God's Grace, v. 12-14

- A. Planting seed sometimes offers a very good yield. For example, you might expect one ear of corn per corn plant, so that one seed yields about 800 kernels of corn. Where else can you get a 1:800 return? Of course, there are costs involved.
- B. Back in the day before genetic engineering, Isaac received a very good crop 100-fold larger than he planted. The Lord blessed him, and he was *very* prosperous in flocks (sheep) and herds (other domesticated animals) and servants. But this blessing led to trials.

IV. Trials of Those Who Are Blessed by God, v. 15-25

- A. The Philistines became envious of Isaac's wealth and blessing. So, they asked him to leave their country because of his prosperity and strength.
- B. Also, at some time in the recent past, the Philistines had plugged up the wells that Abraham had built/dug. They wanted to halt Abraham and Isaac's progress in their front yard. Water is a life-and-death matter. And what a waste their action was. You can tell a lot about a person's character if they are a destroyer rather than a builder, a thief rather than respectful of other people's property. Destroying other people's things *is* theft. You see it today—people who destroy things, even in their own country, and then wonder why they are poor. They are not good stewards of what they have, so the general reality is that God is not going to entrust them with more. The mindset of destruction, probably connected to a mindset of entitlement, tells on your character because it shows you are not a hard worker.
- C. We read some more information about how Isaac had to dig several wells before getting one at which he had uncontested water rights. But Isaac did not fight. He worked/paid his servants to re-dig the old wells and dig new ones. This tells us a lot about

Isaac's character. He was not pugilistic. And finally, he found a place where they left him alone.

- D. Amid all these happenings, God repeats the Abrahamic promises to Isaac twice: 26:2-5 and 26:24-25. Just because Isaac had problems (or you do), does not mean God left him (or you). Notice God's reiterated promise: do not fear, I am with you, I will bless you and multiply you." Isaac reacted much like his father: he built an altar and worshiped God there. Likewise, in view of all the favor God has shown to us, we should be busy worshipping God, giving thanks to God, etc.

V. Treaty: A Relief from Some Trials, v. 26-33

- A. The king of the Philistines, also named Abimelech like the earlier king of Abraham's day, made a treaty with Isaac to maintain the peace. This was a parity treaty between two equals. One was not the servant of the other: they were peers. They ate a meal and took an oath with one another to seal the deal.
- B. Isaac dwelt then at Beersheba, "the well of the oath."

VI. An Internal Family Trial, v. 34-35

- A. The final note in the chapter is that older twin Esau married two Hittite women. They evidently did not believe in the God of Abraham (see 2 Cor. 6:14). This was a cause of grief to Esau's parents. He made a bad choice of wives. It was not merely that they were of the Hittite "race" (for this is no other race than the one human race). If that were really the only reason that the parents were upset, they would be racist. The real reason was that the young women came from pagan idolatry. They were not worshippers of the true God, and Esau had broken the family pattern set by Isaac and Rebekah under Abraham's leadership. Apparently, he was a man who did not want to follow his parents even if it had worked out quite well for them.
- B. This "grief of mind" was a burden, a heavy stone, a stress, because it was more than an offspring doing a boneheaded thing. It is that their son rejected not only the parents' standard but in some sense the parents themselves, and *God*. Isaac and Rebekah did not reject

him, but he was holding their wisdom and arm's length. So troubling was this to Rebekah that Genesis 27:46 records that she said that she was wearied of life. May you not experience that kind of grief in your family.

Conclusion

In Abraham, *and* in Isaac, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. This applies to you and me, for Galatians 3:8-9 says, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."*⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." And Isaac!

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