



The Sermon

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Genesis 26

"Like Father, Like Son"

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TRANSCRIPT

All right, we are in Genesis 26, so if you'll turn in your Bible or on your app or your phone, whatever you have: Genesis chapter 26. And we're going to endeavor to look at the whole chapter, so there's a lot of – as Mark Becker would say, it's like a fruitcake, there's a lot in here. So let's look at Genesis chapter 26, and I will read, and then pray, and then we'll jump in.

Genesis chapter 26 starting in verse 1: "Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. The Lord appeared to him and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.'

Verse 6. " So Isaac lived in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, 'She's my sister,' for he was afraid to say, 'my wife,' thinking, ']the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.' It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, 'Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, "She is my sister"?' And Isaac said to him, 'Because I said, "I might die on

account of her." 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.' So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, 'He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.'

"Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the Lord blessed him, and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. Then Abimelech said to Isaac, 'Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us.' 17 And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there.

Verse 18, "Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, 'The water is ours!' So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah. And he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, 'At last the Lord has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.'

"Then he went up from there to Beersheba. The Lord appeared to him the same night and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of My servant Abraham.' 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.

"And then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and Phicol the commander of his army. Isaac said to them, 'Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?' And they said, 'We see plainly that the Lord has been with you; so we said, "Let us now make an oath between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and sent you away in peace.

You are now the blessed of the Lord.'" Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. And in the morning they arose early and exchanged oaths; then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace. Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac's servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, 'We have found water.' So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

"When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah." Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Dear heavenly Father, we come before You this morning in Genesis chapter 26 and ask for a rich blessing upon this Your word. We thank You that You have revealed Yourself to man. You have done it not only in the pages of Scripture, but you've done it in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came and tabernacled among us, and lived the fulfillment of the Law to perfection, and then climbed upon a tree and died the death that we were unable to die, that He was a vicarious sacrifice and satisfied Your wrath against the sin of mankind. And for any who believe that Jesus Christ is their substitutionary atonement, You have given eternal life, and You make that available this morning to any who are here who do not know Christ. And I pray that as we go through this chapter, You might make application of that in their heart, and give them living water, that they might come to know Jesus Christ. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.
[End]

Well, it's very difficult for anybody who has a famous father. There's a lot of examples of that, and one example would be a man named Grant Hill. Many of you know who Grant Hill is, he's a famous Duke basketball player. And you could argue that Grant was one of the few sons of a great man who actually surpassed his father, now an NBA Hall of Famer and broadcaster. But Grant was living under the shadow of his father Calvin as he grew up. And his father Calvin Hill, for those of you who don't know, played football at Yale, and then was a famous Dallas Cowboy. He was an NFL Rookie of the Year offensively. He was a four-time Pro Bowler, a two-time All-Pro, and he was a Super Bowl champion. And so it's quite a man to be following as a youngster growing up in that household.

And the other day – my wife's a Duke fan, she went to Duke. And so we were listening to Grant Hill talk, and I remembered this as I was preparing this message, because they asked Grant, "What advice would you give to a child of a famous parent?" And he said, "Well actually, I've thought a lot about it, and here's what I would say to them: 'Just remember that no matter how hard you work and how successful you become, people are always going to say it was handed to you.'"

And so I thought about that this morning as we've turned to Genesis chapter 26, because what we have in front of us is a man named Isaac who had arguably the greatest father that you could have. I mean, think about being **the father** of Abraham. There is probably no one in the Scripture that has more ink spilled over them than Abraham, except for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, to have a father who is literally known as "the father of the faith" is a pretty heady thing to grow up in. And so as we think about Isaac I want us to just remember that this is a man who's growing up in the shadow of perhaps the greatest figure in the Scripture other than the Lord Jesus Christ: Abraham himself.

And so before we jump into chapter 26 I want to just set the context, because for those of you who are just new to this study in the book of Genesis as we work through the book, and for those of you who were here perhaps last week, I just want to set our minds clearly on the context as we come to Genesis chapter 26, because we know that the Scriptures build upon each other; and context is everything when we're studying the Bible. The Lord here is passing the torch from Abraham to Isaac. As I was reading through this chapter I'm sure bells and whistles were going off, because a lot of it, if you've been here, especially since chapter 12, it sounds very familiar to what we've heard previously. And so the Lord is passing the torch. You know, the NFL didn't invent Next Man up, the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father did, OK. We see it all through the Scriptures. Moses dies, and Joshua is told, "Moses My servant is dead; Now go." And so we see it all through the Scriptures. And now Abraham has died, and Isaac is now stepping into the spotlight and is taking the mantle from his father Abraham.

Isaac lived one hundred and eighty years. What's interesting is that's longer than Abraham lived, and it's longer than his son Jacob lived. But we know very little about Isaac. There's not much said in the Scriptures about this man. He's relatively undistinguished for a man who lived that long. Isaac is always mentioned as a backdrop in the Scriptures. If he were in Hollywood he would be the quintessential best-supporting actor. And let me give you an example.

In Genesis 24 – Kent taught us Genesis 24 a couple weeks ago – the whole narrative is about Abraham looking for a bride for his son Isaac. And Isaac's mentioned anecdotally at the very end of the chapter, and so he's an afterthought in Genesis 24. In Genesis 25, as Rebekah is getting ready to bear twins, two nations that are in her womb. Isaac is mentioned in passing: he's mentioned for his age of forty, he's mentioned for the prayer that he elicits for his wife, and he's mentioned for loving Esau. And then in Genesis 27 – the chapter that follows, that Andrew Curry will pick up next week – while Jacob is supplanting Esau and he's stealing his birthright with the help of his mother Rebekah, Isaac is mentioned in passing as having blessed the boys, and then standing firm and not changing his blessing once it had been made.

But here in Genesis 26 thorough chapter on Isaac. This is the most thorough description we have of Isaac's life and his words. And so it's an important passage in that regard. And while he's no Abraham, we see here like father, like son. And that's the title of my message, "Like Father, Like Son," a phrase that we repeat even to our day. And so Moses, I really feel like, sets the table for chapter 26 with one verse back in chapter 25. Look back at chapter 25 at verse 11, chapter 25 and verse 11.

The very first part of verse 11 in chapter 25 Moses says this: "And it came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac." That's the springboard for all that we see here in chapter 26, that Abraham was a man who was under God's covenant blessing, and now Isaac is going to be stepping into that same covenant blessing. And so really, that's the hinge upon which this door turns in terms of context.

Griffith Thomas says something I thought was very good. He says this: "Isaac was the ordinary son of a great man, and the ordinary father of a great son." Let me say that again: "Isaac was the ordinary son of a great father, and the ordinary father of a great son."

Now the lessons, these are some lessons that are less important, but these are still lessons nonetheless as we go through this chapter, number one, that fathers need to remember as they go through this chapter, that "what you do will inevitably affect your children, whether good or bad." And for children, for children the lesson is, "Do not follow your father when he is wrong, but only so far as he follows Christ." That's why Paul urges the Corinthians in 1

Corinthians 11:1, "Follow me as I follow Christ." We often use our family as a crutch for why we haven't been the way we should. But the fact of the matter is we all answer to the Lord. The Lord is the one who sets the pace and sets the standard, and so we all answer to Him ultimately.

But before we get to this narrative I want to just say one more thing. As we look at this chapter in more deep reflection, it's not so much about Isaac and Rebekah and the wells and the strife and the wealth. As we look at this chapter in more detail, it's the same theme that we see in every chapter, in every verse, in every book; and the main actor and the main participant in this chapter is the God of Abraham, and now the God of Isaac. You'll remember, He's going to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so as we saw the God of Abraham is now the God of Isaac, and so He is the focus of this chapter. It's about God working in the life of Isaac just as He did in the life of Abraham.

And so that's the focus as He works in Isaac's life, to bring about His plan of redemption for the ages. That's the focus. And if you stick with me here, I want to show you seven things in this chapter as we go through it, seven things about how God is at work in Genesis 26. So stick with me and watch carefully. As Lawson would say - I'm going to use a Lawsonism: "We're gonna take this pie and we're gonna cut it up into seven slices." I know for the women here they're going nuts because you don't cut a pie in seven pieces. But work with me, OK. I couldn't get it to six, all right.

So, number one, number one, "The providence of God," verse 1. The first thing we see in verse 1 is the providence of God. This is my favorite doctrine. We know providence. Providence is God's care for creation. It's the outflow of all that He does with His invisible hand. It's how He gets you from A to B. And so we see here in verse 1, "The providence of God."

Look at verse 1: "Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that occurred in the days of Abraham." Now, notice the repetition of the word "famine." We see that word twice. And we know that famines, especially in the Old Testament, move the narrative. We see that famines in the Old Testament move the narrative.

As an example, back in Genesis 12:10, it's referenced not in the days of Abraham, the famine he had. But in Genesis chapter 12, "Abram" - who

was called Abram at the time – "was moved to Egypt because of a famine." We see in this chapter that we're looking at, Isaac is now going to be moved to Gerar because of a famine. And then, of course, the most famous famine that takes place in the book of Genesis, it'll be later in chapter 41-45. Joseph, the whole narrative of Joseph, is all in the backdrop of what? Of famine. And so this is how the Lord moves the narrative and moves the pieces on the board, if you will, through a famine.

Now obviously, who brings the famine? The Lord is the one who dried up the rain and brought the famine. And why does He do that? Well, it says right here in verse 1: "So Isaac went to Gerar." And the word "Gerar" means "lodging place." And it says that, "He went to Abimelech king of the Philistines." Abimelech's name means "king of my father." Just to keep in mind, this is the same Philistines that we saw back in Abraham's day, but this was probably, as it is Abraham's son Isaac, this is probably Abimelech, son of the Abimelech in Abraham's day, OK. So these are sons following fathers.

Back in Genesis 20 we saw the Philistines in Abraham's day. And so God is moving Isaac through this famine to Gerar. And you're going to see, as we've spoken many times, words that are repeated in the Scriptures are important. We're going to see the word "Gerar" mentioned five times in this chapter. So Gerar has a prominent place as we go through this narrative.

And you know, we often think as believers that providence is only providence if it's a good thing, right? "Well, I got a new job; that was providential." But providence very often can be what the Puritans would say a frowning providence. "I got a diagnosis of something that I really didn't want." "I lost my job. I lost a paycheck that I really needed." Those are frowning providences.

And just as the Lord brings the good, the Lord can also bring the bad, what we consider bad. And one of the reasons for that is I think He uses it to get our attention. Is that fair? He uses it to get our attention. And so He has a famine. Isaac is now in need, and he's moving toward Egypt and is on the way to Gerar.

And I think the lesson here is that the Lord brings these trials for a number of different reasons. We this side of heaven don't know for sure. But first,

He could bring a trial because "He's using it to test us, He's using it to test us," as He did back in chapter 22 with Abraham and Isaac. Next, He could be using it to shape us. Maybe the Lord's brought a trial into your life right now "to shape you." We know that Romans 8:28 is, "He uses all things for good." But Romans 8:29 says what? "That He might conform you to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The third thing is - and we see it right here in verse 1: "He's using it to move us." Perhaps He's using it to move you to another city, or He's using it to move you forward with some relationship. The other thing is, number four, "He could be using it to bless us." How many times have we heard somebody say, "You know, I would have never asked for cancer, but it was the greatest blessing in my life, because it brought me closer to the Lord"? Or, "He could be using it to discipline us. He could be using it to discipline us."

But regardless, we need to ask in verse 1 here, each of us need to ask, "How has the Lord moved us through His providential hand? And what is He doing in your life right now like He is in Isaac in verse 1?" So that's the providence of God.

Look at verse 2, number two, we see, "The promise of God." Providence of God, now we see the promise of God. Look at verse 2: "And the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I shall tell you.'" Now the Lord reveals Himself to Isaac, the first time He's revealed Himself to Isaac that at least we're aware of, and He says, "Don't go down to Egypt." And he's going to stay here in verses 2-6: "Stay here. Don't go to Egypt, stay here." God reveals Himself eight times to Abraham. The record shows eight times He revealed Himself to Abraham. But He only did twice to Isaac, at least what's recorded: in verse 2 here, and in verse 24 of the same chapter, chapter 26.

And so we see here Isaac make his first mistake. This is Isaac's first mistake. Isaac was headed for Egypt. Now we know he's headed for Egypt because God would not have said, "Do not go down to Egypt," had he not been heading that way. We know God knows our thoughts before we think them. And so I think the text implicitly says that Isaac was on his way to Egypt, and God says, "Don't go down there." And so blessing, God is trying to show Isaac he's going to come in the Promised Land, not in the land of Egypt.

And how often do we as believers seek blessing in the things of the world, and God says to us, "No, this is not your home. My blessings are, for the most part, heavenly. They're in the life to come." And so He says here to Isaac, "Don't go down to Egypt; stay here. Blessing will come in the Promised Land, not in the land of Egypt."

Now where would he have gotten this idea? Well, we'll see here in a minute. And we see here that not just the promise of God, but I think we see the patience of God. If I were to add another phrase to this second bullet it would be, "The patience of God." He's incredibly patient with Isaac. Isaac's not going exactly where he should be going, but God is giving him tremendous patience, just as He did with His servant Abraham. And if we're honest, just as He does with you and I. How patient has the Lord been with each of us?

And so, look at verse 3. He says, "Live for a time in this land and I will be with you." That word "live" there is important because it has the Hebrew meaning of "tabernacle" or "tent." In other words, "Put down roots here." Yes, they were Bedouins, but He's saying, "Put down roots and put your tent here. This is where I want you to stay, Isaac." He says, "Live here in this land."

And notice He says, "I will be with you and bless you, for yours descendants' sake. I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and I will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and fulfilled his duty to Me and kept My covenants, My statutes, and My laws."

Well again, that should really, really cause some bells to go off as I read through that, because that is a repetition of what we saw back in Genesis chapter 12, Genesis chapter 12. The Lord said to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12:1-3 this: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you shall be a great blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'"

I want you to notice here in Genesis chapter 26, in verses 3, 4, 5, all the personal pronouns that the Lord is using here. He says, "I will be with you. I will give. I will establish. I swore. I will give. I will multiply." God is at work. And it's the same as it is today in your life and in my life: God is doing a great work in each of our lives as we're believers in Jesus Christ. And so it's about God doing the work.

And just as He did in Abraham's life, now He's going to do the same thing in Isaac's life. And note the conditional nature of the covenant. It's the same as He stated in Genesis chapter 12 with Abram and in Genesis chapter 17 – you remember the chapter on circumcision. And so He's repeating this covenant. You see the passing of the torch here? "What I did for Abraham I'm now going to do for you."

And notice He said three things to Abraham, and He's restating three things to Isaac. Number one, "He's promising him a land. He's promising him a land." And we have the fulfillment, in a sense, as believers today. We have the fulfillment of that as believers, in a sense. In 1 Peter 1:4, Peter says this: "We have an inheritance" – talking about in heaven – "that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven." And so God has given us an establishment. And He said to His disciples in John 14, "If it were not so, I would tell you. I've gone to prepare a place for you." And so He's given us this inheritance.

Second, "He's promised him a nation." He's promised Abraham, and now Isaac, a nation. You saw as we look through those few verses a minute ago, look at your word "descendants." Do you see that? "Descendants. Descendants. Descendants." Some of your translations say "seed," it's the same word, OK. And so He's promising him a nation. He said, "We are heirs of Christ according to His seed." Galatians 3:16 Paul says this: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as one would in referring to many, but as in referring to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." So the point is that Abraham had a son, and Isaac had a son, and Jacob had a son, had a son, had a son, had a son. And ultimately we see in the New Testament that son becomes who? The Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Promised Seed who would take away the sins of the world.

And third, "He promises him a blessing. He promises Him a blessing." We see the fulfillment of that today. And Paul says in Galatians 3:8-9, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'" Verse 9, "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer." This wasn't just something we read about in the book of Genesis. This wasn't just something that was germane to Abraham, or it stopped with Isaac. No, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, this blessing is upon you. You are a seed, you are an heir according to the promise that was given to Abraham.

And notice in verse 6, we continue with God's promise. "So Isaac lived in Gerar." The word "so" there is the purpose, or the goal. What was the goal of God bringing the famine? To move him to Gerar because that where He wanted him to be. And so Isaac lived in Gerar.

Obedience to God's revelation - hear me clearly - obedience to God's revelation is the heartbeat, the very DNA of a believer. If you're here this morning and you're what I was for 24 years, a card-carrying Christian who never read his Bible and didn't really know what it said, I've got news for you; that's a problem, OK, because the DNA and the heartbeat of a believer is obedience to His revelation. What does Jesus say? "You say with your mouth, 'Lord, Lord,' but you do not do with your heart."

And so we see here that Isaac is in obedience to the Lord in staying in Gerar. It reminded me of the hymn "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah" as I thought about this text. "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah, pilgrim through the barren land. I am weak, but Thou art mighty; hold me with Thy powerful hand. Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more; feed me till I want to more."

And we think about a man named Enoch, we looked at in Genesis chapter 5. And what was his commentary? That he walked with God for three hundred years, and God took him. And so that's what it means to be a believer. It's walking with God. And Bruce Waltke, I love what Bruce Waltke says here in this part of Genesis 26. He says, "In faith Abraham went, in faith Isaac stayed." Isn't that good?

You know, I'm speaking for myself. I have a lot easier time going than I do staying. I have a friend who taught me years ago a very, very valuable lesson. "When we're under trial," he says, "stay under the trial, don't seek to flee. Stay under the trial and learn what the Lord has for you." And that has been such great advice. And so Abraham goes, Isaac stays; and both are doing what the Lord has asked them to do.

Look at, third, verses 7-11, number three, "The protection of God." Look at number three, "The protection of God." Verse 7, "When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister,' for he was afraid to say, 'my wife,' thinking, 'the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, since she is beautiful.'" Well, we see here clearly mistake number two. You saw mistake number one, now we see mistake number two, "Lying to save his own skin. Lying to save his own skin."

Now where would he have gotten this crazy idea? Well we, of course, know. The Ten Commandments verbalize this, we see this later on in the Decalogue: "The sins of the fathers," - right? - "the sins of the fathers." We have a running joke in our house: "Anything that the kids do wrong is my DNA, anything the kids do right is my wife's." Actually, that works even better on Mother's Day. But the point is that this is the sins of the fathers - as my dad would say - coming home to roost. Isaac imitates his father Abraham.

And incidentally, as we go through this narrative, you've probably already seen, if you have a highlighter, you're going to see the reference to "father Abraham, father Abraham, father Abraham." Moses wants the reader to see this is Abraham now changing and moving into Isaac. And so we see here the same story, same chapter, different verse, Isaac trying to save his skin, lying about his wife. And he should have known better, because certainly as they were growing up in the house, they had heard the story from his father Abraham about Sarah's near two misses. I mean, Sarah had almost found herself in a pickle because of Abraham's lie twice. And so Isaac should have known better.

But the lesson is so painfully obvious; and we see it today, do we not? How many of us, if we went around the room, know a father who's an alcoholic who has a son who's an alcoholic? How many of us know a father who's cheated on his wife only to have a daughter grow up, marry a man, and then have to sit front row and watch him cheat on his daughter? And so we see

the sins of the fathers passed down. And as I said at the very beginning of this message, this is a lesson for the fathers, that your life will impact your kids for good or for bad.

James Boice says this: "It's extraordinary that we can fall into sin immediately after receiving a great blessing, but our nature is such that it is absolutely possible." Isaac has just received a revelation from the Lord. He has been blessed beyond belief by this restatement of the Abrahamic covenant, and just that quick, in unbelief and in fear he lies about his wife. What Isaac failed to understand and to appropriate is that God's promises had to be fulfilled.

Remember, God said, "I'm going to give you a seed. I'm going to use you for the extension of descendants." And so how could his wife have been harmed? How could his wife have been killed? Well, of course, there's no possibility of that. God's promises are irrevocable, His promises always come true. And He uses the word "descendants," as we saw, four times in verses 3 and 4. So Isaac had no reason to fear.

But lest we are too hard on Isaac, we need to look at our own lives. How often with greater revelation, the New Testament, the whole Canon of Scripture, the benefit of hindsight with the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and yet how often do we doubt God's promises? How often do we step into unbelief because of fear: fear of man, fear of ourselves, fear of consequences?

Look at verse 8: "Now it came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down through a window, and saw them, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah." I want you to notice here that the protection that God gives is again through divine providence. "God's protection is through divine providence."

Abimelech just so happened to be walking by and seeing this act take place. So the Lord, in a sense, pulls back the curtain here to show Abimelech truth of this relationship. And what's fascinating is there's a Hebrew wordplay – I don't want you to miss this. There's a Hebrew wordplay in this word "caressing." This is why the Scriptures are just amazing. This word "caressing" is the Hebrew word "to laugh." It's the Hebrew word "to laugh." And what Moses is doing here is he's using a Hebrew wordplay that the

reader might reflect back upon Sarah and her laughter with regard to a child. Do you remember that in Genesis 18:12? And it also reflects back to Ishmael, the same word, "mocking" in chapter 21, verse 9, when Ishmael mocked Isaac. You remember? And Sarah said, "Get that kid out of here." And so there's a wordplay that Moses doesn't want us to miss. But mark it well: "An unbeliever here exposes the sin of a believer." Abimelech the Pagan exposes the sin of Isaac.

Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Perhaps there's somebody here this morning who is in sin and they think that no one will know, no one sees. The all-seeing eye of God does, and the Scriptures say to that person, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Look at verse 9: "Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, 'Behold, she certainly is your wife! See how it is that you said – why did you say, "She is my sister"?' And Isaac said to him, 'Because I thought otherwise I might be killed on account of her.' The lesson here is that "sin is selfish." Sin is always selfish. Isaac was seeking his own safety, he was seeking self, and so we need to beware of self-seeking.

Abimelech says in verse 10, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." On this text, John Calvin says this: "Let us remember that we must walk in the light which God has kindled for us, lest even unbelievers who are wrapped in the darkness of ignorance should reprove our stupor."

Verse 11, "So Abimelech commanded all the people saying, 'He who touches this man's wife shall certainly be put to death.'" Again, we see God's protection through Abimelech clearing call to his people. God's protection through Abimelech and his call to his people. This is the definition of Proverbs 21:1 where, "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord; and He turns it wherever He pleases."

And so sometimes we see even today that an unbeliever could have more integrity than a believer, right? We've seen that. An unbeliever can have more integrity than a believer. Peter warns us in his epistle, 1 Peter 2:12, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds,

as they observe them, glorify God on the day of visitation." Make no mistake, unbelievers are watching you, and we are to keep our behavior excellent among them.

Look at number four, verses 12-22, "The provision of God." Next, number four, "The provision of God," verses 12-22. Look at verse 12: "Now Isaac sowed in the land and he reaped in the same year a hundred times as much. And the Lord blessed him, and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; and he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him." This is obedience that Isaac has.

The obedience of the Lord here brings Isaac rich blessing. Obedience doesn't always bring wealth and blessing; but here, his obedience to the commands brings blessing. But with this material blessing – and we see it today: "Wealth" – the Proverbs says – "brings many friends." Wealth can also attract envy, it can attract trouble and strife.

So we see the same here with Isaac. This word "envied" is jealous in a bad sense. We know that the Scriptures say, "God is jealous for His people." That's a good jealousy. But here we see the ugly side of envy, the jealous in a bad sense. This is one of the seven deadly sins. It's one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not covet." The Philistines were jealous of Isaac's power and his wealth. And I think we all need to beware: jealousy was the very root sin of the religious elite that ended up turning over our Lord. That was the root sin, Mark 15:10, "For he" – Pilate – "was aware that the chief priests had handed Him" – Christ – "over because of envy."

And so, the envy. Envy, taking root in the heart, is deadly poison. The word "envy" is very simple translation. Webster's defines "envy" as this: "A feeling of discontented or resentful longing aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, or lot in life." And so with this hundred-fold blessing we see the strife that the Philistines brought into Isaac's life. And in verse 17, "Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar." I skipped verse 15: "All the wells the fathers had dug in the days of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up filling them with dirt. And Abimelech said, 'Go away from us, for you're too powerful for us.'"

Abraham's death had caused the negation, in the Philistines mind anyway, of this treaty, this non-aggression treaty they had made with Abraham. As soon as he died they said, "Hey, all bets are off. Let's go fill these wells in, we don't need to worry about that anymore." That was back in Genesis 21. So Isaac leaves to go to the valley of Gerar.

Notice Isaac avoids confrontation. Isaac was a peace-loving man, he didn't want to be in confrontation with these. And I think there's a lesson here that the Christian, the DNA of a Christian should not be combative. We should not be combative, at least as our initial response. Romans 12:18, Paul tells us that, "If possible," - meaning it's not always possible - "as much as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." It's not always going to depend on you. As my father would say, "It takes two to tango," OK. But it depends upon us: "Be at peace with all men."

And I think our Lord is the gold standard, right? He was smitten, He was stricken, He was spat upon and beaten, and yet what? He opened not His mouth, "Like a lamb to the slaughter." And so He was the gold standard, is the gold standard of being at peace with men.

Now Isaac is going to name the wells the same as father Abraham, and he's doing that in order to make these wells uncontestable. Remember, the Philistines felt that Abraham's death gave them license to fill these wells in. Now Isaac's going to be very smart about using the same names that he re-digs these wells with so that he can begin to reclaim what his father Abraham had done before him.

In verse 18, "Then Isaac dug the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham," - see that; like father, like son - "for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley they found there a well of flowing water." That word there in Hebrew is literally "living water," which of course it is in the desert, right? That's the definition of a desert is lack of water.

"The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, 'The water is ours!' So he named it Esek," - which means "contention" - "because they had argued with him. And they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah," which literally is translated in

Hebrew "hatred." Notice the words that are used here in this section here: "They stopped them up, they quarreled. They quarreled, they argued."

And so in a desert climate wells were all about life. We live in a day and age where we just go, we turn on a tap and we don't think about it. If you live in a desert, water is life itself. And so this was all about life. Without water, animals die, crops can't grow, people die, they get thirsty, they die; life is unsustainable. And so as I said a second ago, the lack of water is the very definition of a desert. And so the ancient custom at the time was if you had an enemy you would remove his water source and force him to what? Leave. And so that's what the Philistines are doing, they're removing his water source to get him to move away.

And to possess a well was independence, it was self-reliance. If you had a well, you had life, you had a source of life. And so the generations would hand these wells down to one another. Abraham's wells would be handed down to Isaac and so forth. It was the right to live in a place; that's the idea here, gave you the right to live there. And so I want you to see; don't miss God's provision for Isaac. He provides for him here as he gets these wells active and brings water.

And God wasn't just giving Isaac a place to settle, He was establishing a place for the future of a nation. That's the point: "He was establishing a place for the future of a nation." Look at verse 22: "Then he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth," - which means "open spaces" - for he said, "At last the Lord has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land." Again, God's provision.

Next, number five, verses 23-25, we see, "The presence of God." We see, "The presence of God," number five, verse 23: "And he went up from there to Beersheba." Beersheba is a difficult translation, but most believe it either means "well of seven." "Seven" as you know in the Bible is a number of perfection. Or it means "well of the oath." Could be either one: well of seven or well of the oath. But he named it Beersheba.

And the Lord appeared to him" - a second time - "the same night and said to him," note five things. This is the second time He appeared to Isaac. The only other time it's recorded, and He says to Him - notice these five

things. First, "I am the God of your father Abraham. I am the God of your father Abraham." He elicits the name that He will give Moses later in Exodus 4, the ever-present God who is present tense: "I AM WHO I AM," the very name of God. He says, "I am the God of your father Abraham." And notice, He will not just be the God of Abraham, He will now be the God of Abraham and Isaac, and ultimately the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob throughout the Scriptures.

Number two, He says, "Do not fear. Do not fear." Now why would He have said this? Well, Isaac just got in trouble lying about his wife because of what? Fear. Fear. And what's interesting about this phrase, as I was preparing for a lesson in the Sermon on the Mount for the young at heart, which is basically a Hebrew idiom for, "You're old," OK. As I was studying this – and Jesus said in that passage, "Do not fear," one of Jesus' favorite phrases, "Do not fear. Do not fear." You know what, I'm embarrassed to tell you this; I didn't know this after all these years of being a believer. That phrase, "Do not fear," it's 365 times in the Bible, 365 times. One for every day of the year the Lord has said, "Do not fear." You know why? Because we need it every day.

And so He says to Isaac, "Do not fear." Third, He says, "I am with you. I am with you." This is repeated 27 times in the Bible. And it's fascinating that this is the very last thing Jesus said, in a sense, in His earthly ministry. It's almost the very last thing Christ said in His earthly ministry. In Matthew 28, we know the Great Commission, we can all repeat it. He says, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." And so we see here He says it to Isaac.

And then, fourth, He says, "I will bless you, and I will multiply your descendants." This is again, He's continuing to strike that drum, "The Abrahamic covenant is alive and well. Isaac, I'm passing the torch to you. I'm going to continue My work as I did in Abraham through Isaac; I'm going to do it on in through Jacob."

Number five, He says, "For the sake of My servant Abraham." And the reason He says that is because He's saying, in a sense, "This is a unilateral covenant, Isaac. It's not about you, it's not because of you." Remember in the early part of this chapter, He says, "I will. I will. I will. I will." God is doing the work here.

And if you remember, back in Genesis chapter 15 Lawson said that this was R. C. Sproul's favorite verse. In chapter 15, verse 17, it says, "Now it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, a smoking oven and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the pieces." At this point, where was Abraham? He was asleep, he was completely passive; and God was cutting this covenant and swearing upon Himself. As the author to the Hebrews said, "He can swear by no one greater." And so He swears by two unalterable things.

And so God cut the covenant. God is the one who's going to keep the covenant. You're secure because God's promises are secure. God cannot lie, and He cannot change. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the same today, yesterday, and yes, forever.

And so He cuts this covenant with Abraham, and now He's restating this to Isaac as He gives this revelation. And notice in response. What does Isaac do? Look at verse 25. In response to this revelation here's what Isaac does, number one, "He builds an altar." Verse 25, "So he built an altar." Number two, "He called upon the name of the Lord." Number three, "He pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well." Fourth, "They dug a well."

I want you to notice in verse 25 the repetition of the word "there." I think it's important, because Isaac was given a famine by the hand of the Lord to move him to Gerar, and I think what this is saying here to us is, notice: "He built an altar there. He called upon the name of Lord and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well." He's where he's supposed to be, doing what he's supposed to be doing there in Gerar. And like Abraham his father, Isaac builds an altar to worship the Lord in Beersheba.

I want you to notice that the revelation of God produces the worship of God. Do you see that? "The revelation of God produces the worship of God." When we pick up our Bible, that's God's revelation to us. And the response is that we might worship Him, because He's worthy. That's the root of the word "worship." He's worthy of it. And so revelation produces worship.

Notice, number six. Number six, in verses 26-33, "The peace of God." Number six, "The peace of God." Look at verse 26: "The Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and Phicol the commander of his

army. And Isaac said to them, 'Why have you come to me, since you hate me and sent me away from you?'" Solomon tells us in Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirs up strife." Do we not see that here in chapter 26? Yes, of course we do.

Verse 28, "And they said, 'We have seen plainly that the Lord has been with you; and he said, 'An oath must now be taken by us, that is by you and us, so let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you or have done nothing to you but good.'" Now I've got to stop there and chuckle just a little bit.

Look at what they say: "We've done nothing to you but good." Now call me crazy, but filling up wells in a desert with dirt is not a good thing, OK. And he said, "We have sent you away in peace. Now you are blessed of the Lord." I want you to notice that even the Philistines see the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. Do you see that? Even the Pagan Philistines have seen, "This man is blessed. This man is different." Laban's going to see the blessing in Jacob.

The nation of the Philistines saw the blessing in Abraham. And for those of you who are believers in Jesus Christ, the world's going to see there's something different in you - at least they should. There's something different in you. You are blessed of the Lord. And so we see here this word "peace" is repeated twice. You see that? Twice we see that word "peace." And this is God orchestrating peace.

Just a second ago in the chapter we saw strife and quarreling and filling of wells and re-digging the wells and Isaac having to leave. And now God gives him peace. God orchestrates peace, and we know that because God is the Prince of Peace; that's the Lord Jesus Christ. If He's given you peace with God - you were formerly at enmity - once He solved that, then He gives you the peace of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And so God orchestrates peace with Isaac. And it reminds us of Proverbs 16:7 where Solomon says, "When a person's ways are pleasing to the Lord, He causes even his enemies to make peace with him." This is a living embodiment of what Solomon is saying here in chapter 26.

James Boice on this section says this: "Grief is a blessed thing if it is used by God to bring us to Beersheba where we can again worship Him and

receive the fullness of His blessing." And I think if we stop and ask ourselves, each of us here, "How many of us have walked through grief only to find God's blessing?" You see, like father, like son. Abraham's sanctuary Beersheba previously in Genesis is now Isaac's sanctuary and place of worship. Again, the passing of the torch.

And finally, look at number seven, "The plan of God." Number seven, verses 34 and 35, "The plan of God." Verse 34, "When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah." That word "grief" in the Hebrew is "bitterness of spirit, bitterness of spirit."

Here we have a sudden change in the narrative. It almost seems as I began to study this, it almost seems as though the needle goes off the record here, right? We're talking about Isaac and everything that's going on, and all of a sudden these last two verses just seem oddly placed, almost like they belong in Genesis chapter 27. But Moses has a reason for placing them here. Obviously the breaks in the Bible are manmade not by Moses. But there's a reason why I think Moses gives us this change of course here about Isaac in this sudden narrative change. He's jumping ahead now to Esau at forty years old. And I think one of the reason's he's doing that is because we learned in the last chapter that Isaac was forty when he got married. And so there's a parallel here that he's lifting Isaac at forty who married Rebekah to now bringing Esau up at forty who's marrying these two Pagan wives. And as we heard last week, Esau was a slave to his appetites.

I think Austin did a wonderful job of bringing that out. Esau was a man of the flesh, he was a man of the world, and so he was a slave to his appetites. He despised his birthright for some stew. And now he's taking two Pagan wives. This should not be a surprise to us. This is just part and parcel to who Esau is. And so he's manifesting the fact that he despises God's ways, he despises God's covenants. As Austin Duncan rightly said, surely he had sat upon Abraham's very knee, he had heard the same stories that his brother had, and yet he despised his birthright. He despised the things of God because he loved the world and he loved the flesh and his appetites. And so this is just what a Pagan does, he takes Pagan wives.

Everything up to this point in chapter 26 took place before Jacob and Esau were born. I think we know that because the lie about Rebekah, she's childless for twenty years, and so this is almost a digression in chapter 26,

and he's looking ahead here to now Esau who's forty and getting married. But it's in direct conflict with what God says through Moses in Deuteronomy 7:3, "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them," - meaning foreign nations - "you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons."

You remember the great pains that Abraham took to send his servant into a distant land to find a wife for Isaac. He did that because he was obeying the Lord's commands to not take a foreign wife, to stay within the covenant people. And so he went through great pains to find Rebekah. And here we have Esau, in a sense, grabbing the first thing near him, these two Pagan women, directly in contrast with what God's revelation would have.

And so Isaac really is probably partially to blame for this outcome. He knew about the great lengths that Abraham had made to find him a wife, he was party to that. And so should he have been stronger about going to find a woman for his son Esau? And he knew the promises and blessings wouldn't flow through Esau even though he loved Esau more; he was hopeful that they would flow through him. And so he either failed to invest the time and energy to find Esau a non-Canaanite wife, or Esau just disobeyed his parents and refused to follow in his father's footsteps. But either way, it was a tremendous source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah.

But make no mistake - as Austin said last week - this was all part of God's grand plan. We know the Scripture and divine response says multiple times in the Bible, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." And what does Esau do? He manifests throughout the Scriptures that he's an unbeliever by all of his actions and all of his words. Matthew Henry says this: "Children have little reason to expect God's blessing who do that which is a grief of mind to good parents." If you are going your own way and you are disobeying your good parents and following after the world, you have no reason to expect God's blessing.

And so, what can we say about this chapter as we wrap it up here? Well, number one, I think the one thing that we see clearly is that, "The Lord cares, the Lord oversees, He guides and provides for in the most intimate details of Isaac's life throughout this chapter." And I think He does the same for us, right? He cares about us, He oversees us, He guides us, He provides for us. He's in the weeds of your life, He's in the details of your

life, and He's orchestrating everything for your good and for His glory, even when you don't think it's good.

Number two, "This is a record of God's faithfulness." It's a record of God's faithfulness, not only to Isaac, but it's about the faithfulness to His people and to God's promises to those people. And it's throughout the ages. As I said a minute ago, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and so His promises and His people will always be cared for, because God keeps His promises.

Number three, "The God of Abraham is now the God of Isaac." And as we'll hear in future messages, He will be the God of Jacob. And so He's the God of Abraham, He's the God of Isaac, and He's the God of Jacob. And if you're here this morning, as I said earlier, and you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is your God, He is your God. He's the God of Kent, and of Steve, and of Amy, and of Mary, and of Leslie. He is your God, and that should give you all the encouragement that you need to walk with Him as Enoch did, to obey Him, because all believers in Jesus Christ can claim this God as their Father.

And then, finally, you remember at the very beginning of this I talked about "like father, like son" and I talked about how this chapter is really less about Isaac and Rebekah and the wells and all the in-fighting and it's really about the God of Isaac. Well, I want to close by highlighting the supreme example of a father and a son, and I want you to turn with me to John chapter 5, John chapter 5, and then we'll land the plane. John chapter 5.

Make no mistake about it, we serve a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three Persons distinct, but one in essence; all very God of very God, but distinct in Their personhood, OK. But with regard to the Father and the Son, we have the ultimate example throughout every page of Scripture of "like Father, like Son." And I'll look at verse 19. Now in context, Jesus has just healed a man at Bethesda, and He got in hot water, you remember, because the Pharisees in their brilliance said, "You can't heal on the Sabbath." And so that has taken place in this chapter. And in verse 18, the context was Jesus Christ was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Now Jesus tells us in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." So Jesus made no bones about the fact that He was equal in essence as very God of very God with the Father. And look at verse 19, chapter 5, verse 19 of John: "Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to who He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.'"

Do you see how inextricably linked the Father and the Son are? You can't know God the Father apart from Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ said, "Unless My Father draws you, you can't know Christ." And so as we close this morning I want to ask everybody in here a question: "Who's your Father? Who's your Father?" Not talking about your earthly father.

Jesus told the religious elite. They said, "Well, Abraham's our father." And Jesus said, "You're of your father the devil." There's only two choices. You're either in Adam or you're in Christ, the second Adam, Romans 5. You're either of your father the devil or your Father in heaven. Those are the only two families that exist upon the earth.

And so as we think about this chapter and Isaac following in the footsteps of his father Abraham, we need to each ask ourselves, "Who is our Father? Is it the heavenly Father of the Bible who's been manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, or is it, as Paul says in Ephesians, the spirit who is at work in the sons of disobedience, the one that Esau followed - Satan and the father of lies?"

And so as we think about this text, I would urge you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of God the Father in heaven, who walked this earth, lived a perfect life that you are not capable of living, died the perfect death, that you are not capable of dying, and He offers to you this morning salvation in His person, and He says, "All who come to Me I will in no wise cast out." And then you will know what it is to cry, "Abba, Father."

[Prayer] Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for Genesis chapter 26 and for all that You can teach us through this text. Father, we haven't even scratched the surface of the truths that are found herein. But for the sake of time, we need to close and give You the glory for the opportunity to study Your word. Pray that if there's anybody here who does not know Christ that You would make application of that, give them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to understand. And we pray for Your rich blessing upon the week ahead, that we might keep our conduct excellent among the Gentiles, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.