

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 26:1-17**

**“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 Jehovah appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed 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." 6 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. 7 And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." 8 Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife. 9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.' " 10 And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." 11 So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death." 12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him. 13 The man began to prosper, & continued prospering until he became very prosperous; 14 for he had possessions of flocks & possessions of herds and a great number of servants.”**

## **"Like Father Like Son"**

**This morning brings us to the first of two weeks where we will learn some things about the life of Isaac: The Son of Promise!**

- **We are going to see him stumble as his father did and we are also going to see God’s faithfulness to him just as we did with Abraham.**

**Now the accounts here in the Book of Beginnings are generally chronological but we can be pretty sure that the events we see here in chapter 26 took place before the birth of Jacob & Esau.**

- **The account of what happened in Gerar would not make a whole lot of sense if Rebekah had young twins in tow!**

**I would argue that what we studied in chapters 24 & 25 were the introduction to the characters who will largely fill out the rest of Genesis. After spending a great deal of time with Abraham, Jacob is quickly brought onto the stage and as I mentioned last time he will be with us until his death at the end of the long account of Joseph’s life. After the events of this chapter our story will largely shift to the life of Jacob and so some might wonder if Isaac is just a bit of filler here in God’s story of redemption...**

**However, we must remember that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all given as examples of faith in the great hall of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. More importantly we have God here laying the groundwork for how He would relate to His people throughout the history of redemption!**

**We will see this near the end of Genesis when Joseph was preparing to die:**

**Genesis 50: “24 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land [Egypt] to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, & to Jacob."**

After we leave Genesis, by my count, you will find God referring to Himself as the God who is in covenant with Abraham, with Isaac & with Jacob at least 30 times! And this is finally stated to the nation of Israel as a judgment against them when Steven makes his defense in Acts 7:

Acts 7: “30 And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. 31 When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, 32 saying, 'I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and dared not look.”

And it is the truth of this covenant that we see our writer focusing on at the beginning of today's text...

“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 Jehovah appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.”

Isaac is the promised son in the promised line and he is to remain in the Promised Land and we see again how all of these promises to Isaac, as was the case with Abraham revolve around this line of promise & the land...

- God's blessings center on the line and the land: The Person and the place of our salvation:
- Where Jesus was lifted up!
- And as the angels proclaimed at the birth of Jesus, it will bring great joy which shall be to all people!

And we read of this impact at verse 4 “And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed 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.” 6 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.”

As a quick aside, we should be careful to NOT just casually read past those last verses about Abraham's obedience: When we think about the Law or commandments and statutes what comes to mind?

Yes, we should rightly think of the Mosaic covenant because it is surely there where we are given the most details about God's Law! There we find all the laws & commands and the various case laws and examples to help us understand them properly. However this all came some four hundred years AFTER Abraham so I think we should give some thought to just what were the statutes, commands and laws that Abraham is commended for keeping?

It is important to remember that God's character and God's covenant of redemption have never changed in the history of His Creation and thus while Moses may have had more details than Abraham and while we may have a greater understanding of what it all means than Moses even did, the basic truth is there for all of us just the same! This is why Abraham and the other ancients knew about right sacrifices and about tithing and even about just laws and the institution of marriage.

And these were not just secrets that God told Abraham which is obvious as our story unfolds here in Gerar... Even this pagan nation understood the sanctity of marriage which should cause us great concern when we see how lightly it is being treated today in our nation:

Whether it is the attacks being made by those who want marriage to be something it is not on the one side, or those who profess to defend marriage while turning a blind eye to the rampant adultery and fornication in our midst.

- And yes, both of these are problems even within the Church!

But before we get to the King's response we see that sadly Isaac has learned some bad habits from his father which led to my sermon title for this morning...

7 "And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold."

- Just as his father before him, Isaac fears for his life and fails to trust God or protect his wife as he should have.

And as was the case with his father, God will not allow his sin to obstruct God's plan and He will Himself protect the woman who would bring forth the next promised son in the line of promise. And truly there is nothing more hurtful to a parent than when we see our own children picking up our bad habits or carrying any area of weakness in our lives further out to its logical conclusions.

Often there may be things that we have done even with the best of intentions for years that we later repented of and turned away from, but we risk still hearing those dreaded words, 'But you and mom always...' And while we are all so VERY thankful that God is so VERY gracious in our lives, forgiving our sins and teaching us better ways to walk and even delivering us in many cases from well-deserved consequences... We still run the risk of our own children or others who respect us thinking, 'well it turned out OK for them so we need not fear to walk there as well...'

- Many very sad circumstances have resulted from such thinking!

Now we don't know for sure just how much Isaac knew about his father's sins in this area or whether he was assuming that because it turned out OK for his parents he should try it as well or if he is just falling prey to his own human frailty...

- But in either case once again God does protect His wife:

8 "Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife. 9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.' "

Now here, unlike his father before him Isaac does not try to justify his use of 'sister' because Rebekah is a close relative, but owns up to his own fear.

10 And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us?"

One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." 11 So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

- So just as we shall see many times in the rest of redemptive history, God is here using someone outside of His covenant people to protect and guard His covenant people.

This does not mean that Abimelech was a role model to look up to anymore than the Babylonian Empire or the Persian and Greek Empires or even the Roman Empire, who were all used to protect God's people are good role models upon which to build nations!

God always uses means to move His people and His history where they need to go and that often includes great blessing for God's people as we then see in our text...

- But don't get too excited because we will see next week that this prosperity is going to bring some problems into the life of Isaac.

**For this morning let us take comfort in knowing that God understands our frailties and blesses us even in the midst of them!**

**12 “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him. 13 The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; 14 for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.”**

**We will deal with those Philistines next week but for this morning I want to turn to one of the Psalms on our suggested reading list this week as we ponder God’s care in our lives...**

- **As we reflect on how God protected Rebekah and blessed Isaac, even when he feared for his life!**

**Psalm 139 is a Psalm of David written for the Chief Musician. And it begins with ‘O Jehovah,’**  
*[the Name that God revealed to Moses as He spoke to him as the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob Printed with ALL capital letters in most translations]*

**“O Jehovah You have searched me and known me. 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Jehovah, You know it altogether. 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”**

- **This is the confidence that we should have as we face the trials and tribulations of this life!**
- **God promises to direct our steps and He uses means to do so!**

**Often those means come as examples, and we can have good examples and bad examples!**

- **As I mentioned earlier there is perhaps no greater heartbreak for a parent then to see a son or daughter practicing the sins of their parents!**

**If you are familiar with the period of the judges and the kings, you know that this often happened: We hear “everyone did what was right in their own eyes in Judges and over and over again we see wicked Kings in both Israel and Judah ‘followed the sins’ of their fathers.**

**Of course that is contrasted for us with the many many calls from God to follow Him and He does give us examples to follow on the right path, with both His beloved Son and those who faithfully serve him...**

**Listen to how the Apostle Paul encourages the Saints at Thessalonica in this final letter to them...**

**II Thessalonians 3: “4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.**

**5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.**

**6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”**

- **Paul quickly points out that there are bad examples as well as good ones and that the bad ones are to be avoided!**

7 “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.”

- And we see this again as the Apostle Paul reminds young Timothy of what we see here often in the Book of Beginnings:
- It is God who is in control!

I Timothy 1: “8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”

The Apostle Paul is even bolder in his first letter to the Saints at Corinth and it is easy to miss because there is a chapter break right in the middle of what I think is a single thought:

I Corinthians 10: “31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

Now there were certainly some things in Paul's life that were not good examples, like persecuting the church of God or even his split with Barnabas after his conversion, but just as we know the sins and warts of the various Saints in that Hebrews hall of faith, the Apostle is unafraid to say boldly, ‘follow me as I follow Jesus!’

- I will close with his similar admonition in the Letter to the Philippians where I discovered another awkward chapter break!

Paul has listed many of the things he could boast of in his flesh and then we read these familiar words...

3:7 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind & reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

**18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.**

**20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**

**4:1 "1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved."**

**Communion Meditation: Ruth 2**

**"12 The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." 13 Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."**

**14 Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. 15 And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."**