

Genesis 26:1-33
(Two Weeks)

Introduction

1. While I was preparing to go to seminary, the music pastor pulled me aside with a question and some advice:
 - a. His question was whether or not I was absolutely convinced God wanted me to go to seminary (not if I wanted to go, but if I was sure God wanted me to go)
 - b. His advice was NOT to go UNLESS I was indeed absolutely convinced
 - c. I welcomed his counsel because I respected him and knew he approached me out of love and concern for my well-being
 - d. He spoke from experience because he graduated from seminary and knew the challenges and difficulties I would face, especially since I graduated from a secular college with no formal theological training to prepare me for seminary
2. His counsel resonated with me and I thought long and hard about it, prayed about it, and ultimately made the decision to go to Grace Seminary because I was convinced God wanted me to go:
 - a. It wasn't an easy decision because I had no money, no way to pay tuition, no place to live, no job lined up, and I would have to leave a fantastic church and some of the Godliest people I had ever known
 - b. However, Isaiah 41:10 kept coming to mind: **"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."**
 - c. That stuck with me all throughout seminary because it was four of the most brutal years in my life, and would never have made it to graduation without God being there with me, strengthening me, helping me, and upholding me with His righteous right hand
3. In our passage today the Lord made a similar promise to Isaac:
 - a. The passage is a long one so I'm going to spend two weeks on it
 - b. I've also broken it down into five sections:
 - 1) In the first section, we find God's PROMISE to be with Isaac and to bless him
 - 2) In the four sections that follow this, we see how God was with Isaac and blessed Him in at least four ways:
 - a) He PROTECTED Isaac
 - b) He PROSPERED Isaac
 - c) He PROVIDED for Isaac
 - d) He gave PEACE to Isaac

A. The LORD PROMISED to be with Isaac (READ 26:1-10)

1. Our passage begins with Isaac leaving his home in Beer-lahai-roi due to a famine:
 - a. v. 1 reminds us of the famine Abraham faced shortly after he arrived in the land (recorded in Genesis 12:10)
 - b. Famines were not uncommon in Canaan because it was rocky, had a short rainy season, and the rest of the year rain was irregular
 - c. So, it was common for people to move around to find more fertile regions during times of drought and famine, and Abraham did that himself and headed south to Egypt
2. It appears Isaac's ultimate plan was to head to Egypt like his father, but God intervened:
 - a. Isaac initially went northeast toward the Mediterranean Sea to a Philistine city named Gerar, apparently to seek help of a king named Abimelech:
 - 1) He might have chosen this area because Abraham lived there for a while and had made a covenant with King Abimelech (NOTE: it's the second place he lied about Sarah being his sister, and where Abimelech took Sarah to be his wife)
 - 2) However, it's not clear if this was the same King Abimelech because as much as 100 years may have passed between Abraham's interaction with Abimelech and Isaac's
 - 3) The arguments in favor of this being the same Abimelech are:
 - a) The name of this King Abimelech's army general was Phicol, the same as the King Abimelech Abraham interacted with (compare Genesis 21:22 with 26:26)
 - b) This King Abimelech is familiar with Yahweh, and even responds to Isaac's deception in a way that suggests he was the same King Abimelech confronted by Yahweh after Abraham's deception
 - b. When the LORD appeared to Isaac He told him not to go down to Egypt but to stay in Gerar, and He made him a two-fold promise:
 - 1) The first part of the promise was He would be with Isaac (3a): **"I will be with you..."** (3a):
 - a) We could probably do an entire series on this phrase because God repeated it to Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, and ultimately Israel through the prophet Isaiah
 - b) It's hard to capture all that this means in a simple phrase, but essentially God's promise to Isaac (and these others) was an offer of His divine companionship, we might even say His fellowship and friendship
 - c) However, it was more than just His presence and companionship because it was also tied to His blessings which is what we see in the second part of the promise
 - 2) The second part of the promise was that He would bless Isaac (READ 3a-4):
 - a) When God speaks of blessing someone it refers to bestowing His divine favor on them and we see that here
 - b) In this case, it refers specifically to God establishing with Isaac the same oath He had made to Abraham:

- 1) He would multiply Isaac's descendants as the stars of heaven
 - 2) He would give his descendants all the land of Canaan
 - 3) And, through his descendants he would bless all the nations of the earth
- c. As we'll see in the rest of the passage, God's companionship and blessings went above and beyond these promises, but before we move on it's important to note that God's promises were linked to faithfulness and obedience:
- 1) In v. 5 we read that part of the reason God made this promise to Isaac was because of Abraham's obedience (READ 26:5)
 - 2) However, go back to v. 3; notice that God told Isaac, "**sojourn in this land [that's a command] and I will be with you and bless you...**"
 - 3) God's promise to Isaac came with an expectation: that He would obey God and stay in Gerar, and that his obedience would result in God's blessings
3. Takeaway: God promises to be with us and bless us:
- a. As the Son of God, Jesus not only came and LITERALLY dwelt among us in the flesh, but today HE dwells WITHIN us
 - 1) Romans 8:9 says that the Spirit of God now dwells within us as believers
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 6:16 says God lives within us because we are now His temple
 - 3) In Galatians 2:20 Paul wrote, "**it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me**"
 - 4) The author of Hebrews and Peter describe this as having become "**partakers of Christ**" (Hebrews 3:14), "**partakers of the Holy Spirit**" (Hebrew 6:4), and "**partakers of the divine nature**" (2 Peter 1:4)
 - 5) Folks, you can't get any more GOD WITH US than GOD **WITHIN** US!
 - b. It is this union and companionship which form the basis of His blessings to us, but just like there was with Isaac, there is an expectation that we are to walk in faithful obedience if we expect to receive them

**In the next four sections of our passage we see examples of how the LORD was with Isaac, some of the ways He blessed him, and how each of these relate to us as Christians

<p>B. The LORD PROTECTED Isaac (READ 26:6-11)</p>

1. We have here an example of "like father, like son":
 - a. You may remember back when Abraham lived in Gerar that he was afraid that if the Philistines knew Sarah was his wife they would kill him, so he lied and said she was his sister (he said, "**there was no fear of God in this place**", Genesis 20:11)
 - b. Isaac believed the same thing so he also lied about Rebekah being his sister
 - c. The ruse worked for "**a long time**", but one day King Abimelech caught sight of Isaac "**caressing**" Rebekah (more literally "**playing with**" suggesting flirtation) and the jig was up (RE-READ 9-10)

2. You might remember that when Abraham did the same thing (with the Egyptians and the Philistines), both times God protected him and Sarah by confronting the Pharaoh and King Abimelech:
 - a. In fact, he told King Abimelech at the time, **“I also kept you from sinning against Me, therefore I did not let you touch her.”**
 - b. Here with Isaac and Rebekah, there didn’t appear to be any need for God to confront Abimelech because no one had yet taken Rebekah to be his wife
 - c. However, if this was the same king Abimelech, I can’t help but wonder if God’s words were still ringing in his ears when he first discovered Isaac’s ruse; there was a moral aspect to his words when he confronted Isaac that we wouldn’t expect from a pagan, Canaanite king (RE-READ 26:10)
 - d. He was so concerned that he immediately issued a decree that anyone who touched Isaac or Rebekah would be killed
 - e. Based on what we read here, Isaac didn’t need to lie to protect himself because it appears the king knew the consequences of taking another man’s wife
 - f. I believe this was a sign of God’s divine work in protecting Isaac
3. Takeaway: God protects us:
 - a. While the Bible does not guarantee that we will never face danger, suffering, pain or loss, it does call on us to trust in the LORD’s ability to protect us
 - b. The Psalms are filled with the prayers of King David and others as they faced death and danger expressing not just their hope but their confidence in God’s protection
 - c. Both Peter and Paul spoke of God’s protection from physical danger:
 - 1) Peter:
 - In Acts 12, Herod put James and John to death and then arrested Peter and threw him into prison
 - Multiple times the passage says the Church was praying fervently for Peter
 - Then, an angel appeared and miraculously rescued Peter by leading him out of prison
 - Peter responded, **“Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting”** (Acts 12:11)
 - 2) Paul also spoke of God’s protection during dangerous times:
 - Twice he called on readers of his letters to pray for his protection (Romans 15:31; 2 Thessalonians 3:2)
 - And in his second letter to Timothy he referred twice to the Lord rescuing him (2 Timothy 3:1; 4:17)
 - d. However, God’s greatest promises of protection are not our earthly protection, but spiritual:
 - 1) The LORD promised us that His peace would protect our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (READ Philippians 4:4-7)

- 2) He promised to protect us from evil and the evil one (READ 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 4:18)
- 3) He promised to protect our salvation and the inheritance we have in Him (READ 1 Peter 1:3-5)
- 4) Even the treasures we have stored up in heaven are protected by Him (READ Matthew 6:19)

C. The LORD PROSPERED Isaac (READ 26:12-14)

1. We've already seen in our study of Abraham how the LORD blessed Isaac by prospering him financially, but also by making his name great among the residents of Canaan
2. We see that here with Isaac as the LORD prospered him as well:
 - a. Isaac prospered in his work: in the first year his crops returned 100-fold:
 - 1) There's no way to know for sure if this is to be taken literally (a return of \$100 for every \$1 invested) or if it's an idiom for an abundant crop, but either way it was a huge return
 - 2) We also have to keep in mind that there was a famine in the land and it likely affected Gerar because it was only about 70 miles from where Isaac came, and it was also in the Negev which typically received very little rain
 - b. Isaac prospered in prominence and influence: the LORD blessed him and made him great which means he became a prominent and well-known man in the region: notice the repetition of the word (RE-READ 26:12b-13)
 - c. Isaac prospered financially: he **"became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household..."**; In fact, he became so wealthy that the **"Philistines envied him"** (13-14)
3. Takeaway: God prospers us:
 - a. What we've just seen with Isaac is descriptive not prescriptive, meaning that just because God prospered Isaac in these ways, doesn't mean He will prosper us in the same way
 - b. God prospered Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all of Israel with earthly prosperity and possessions because His covenant with them was an earthly one with an earthly inheritance (Deuteronomy 28:11-12)
 - c. However, our covenant with God is a spiritual one which means our blessings and prosperity mainly come in spiritual and eternal forms:
 - 1) The Bible says that God **"has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"** and that we have an eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:3-6)
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, **"...that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."**

- d. This doesn't mean God doesn't prosper us financially; He often does by giving us more than we need; but the Bible warns us about pursuing wealth:
 - 1) Jesus warned us about storing up treasures on earth, and instead said we are to store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)
 - 2) Likewise, Paul warned Timothy about the dangers of pursuing earthly riches (READ 1 Timothy 6:8-11)
- e. Instead of looking for God to prosper us financially, we should be looking for Him to prosper us spiritually and eternally

D. The LORD PROVIDED for Isaac (READ 26:15-25)
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- 1. As a result of jealousy over Isaac's prosperity, the Philistines drove him out of Gerar and tried to prevent his access to water by filling his wells with dirt:
 - 1) You may remember Abraham had a similar conflict with the Philistines back in Genesis 21 where they confiscated his well; he finally confronted King Abimelech over it
 - 2) Here we are told that after Abraham died that they stopped up his wells, and then when Isaac re-dug the wells, the Philistines filled them in again
 - 3) After Isaac moved out of Gerar into the valley and dug new wells, the Philistines argued that the water was theirs—not only once but twice!
 - 4) Obviously, without wells Isaac's livestock and crops would die and he would be decimated, especially because the land was experiencing drought and famine
- 2. However, the LORD ultimately provided for Jacob:
 - 1) v. 22 says that Isaac moved again, dug a new well and the Philistines didn't contest the well this time
 - 2) Isaac immediately recognized it as God's provision naming the place "**Rehoboth**" (meaning broad places) and declaring, "**At last Yahweh has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land**"
 - 3) After an undetermined amount of time, Isaac moved back to Beersheba where the LORD appeared to him and confirmed again that He would be with him, bless him, and multiply his seed (RE-READ 26:23-24)
 - 4) After building an altar, calling upon the name of the LORD, pitching his tent there, Isaac's servants successfully dig another successful well, another sign of God's provision
- 3. Takeaway: God provides for us
 - 1) We saw how He provided for Isaac's needs—wells of water in the midst of drought and famine
 - 2) In the same way, Jesus told us not to worry because if we seek God's kingdom, He will provide everything we need (READ Matthew 6:25-34)
 - 3) Paul understood this principle (READ Philippians 4:10-20)
 - 4) So many of us spend so much time focusing on what we need that we forget to focus on the One who promises to provide for our needs

E. The LORD gave Isaac PEACE (26:26-33)

1. Throughout this chapter we've seen the tension and even animosity between Isaac and the Philistines:
 - a. Isaac lied to them about Rebekah being his sister
 - b. The Philistines became jealous and plugged up Isaac's wells
 - c. King Abimelech kicked Isaac out of the city into the valley, where the Philistines continued to plug up Isaac's well and fight over water rights
 - d. It's no wonder Isaac met King Abimelech saying, **"Why have you come to me since you hate me..."** (27)
2. Nonetheless, King Abimelech came to Isaac to make a peace covenant:
 - a. The king's comment, **"we see plainly that Yahweh has been with you..."** indicates that he recognized Isaac's relationship with the LORD and the LORD's blessings on his life
 - b. It also suggests that he either recognized the advantage of being at peace with Isaac, or that he certainly didn't want to be an enemy of someone whom God favored
 - c. Either way, he wanted to ensure peace with Isaac so Isaac obliged him by establishing a peace covenant with him
3. Takeaway: God gives us peace
 - a. The Hebrew word most often translated **"peace"** in the OT is shalom, and it's used in primarily three ways:
 - 1) About 25 times it's used as a greeting
 - 2) About sixty times it's used to refer to being free from conflict or strife
 - 3) However, nearly sixty percent of the time it reflects the concept of completeness, wholeness, harmony, and even fulfillment as a result of God's presence
 - b. We see this reflected in the NT as well:
 - 1) Peace is used as a greeting in many of the epistles; in fact, many of Paul's letters begin with the same salutation, **"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"**
 - 2) We also see peace used in the NT to refer to the absence of strife and conflict:
 - a) We are called on repeatedly to pursue peace with all men, not only fellow believers but the unsaved as well (Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Hebrews 12:14)
 - b) The NT even uses peace to describe our relationship with God:
 - This refers to removing the conflict and strife between God and us that existed because of our sin
 - Romans 5:1 says, **"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"**

- Colossians 1:19-20 says that it **“was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him [Jesus] and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross...”**
- 3) But, wait! There’s more!
- a) God didn’t stop by simply removing the strife and conflict between Himself and us
 - b) He goes above and beyond and gives us the third kind of peace I mentioned a few moments ago which refers to completeness, wholeness, harmony, and even fulfillment as a result of God’s presence in our lives
 - c) We see this reflected throughout the NT:
 - Colossians 3:15: **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...”**
 - Philippians 4:7: **“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”**
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:23: **“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”**
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:16: **“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance...”**
 - Finally, 2 Peter 1:2-3 (READ)

Conclusion

1. God promised Isaac that He would be with him and bless Him. He protected him, prospered him, provided for him, and gave him peace
2. In the same way, God promises us that He will be with us and bless us, and He will protect us, prosper us, provide for us, and gives us peace