

## GOD ESTABLISHES ISAAC'S FAMILY

Genesis 24:1-67

Key verse 24:60

"And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies.'"

Thanks be to the Lord for the Genesis Bible study, through which we may come to know God as the Almighty Creator God and the God of promise. Abraham accepted God's promise and obeyed God's calling and left his fatherland according to His instruction. After 25 years of faith training, Isaac the son was born to him. When God tested him in chapter 22, he showed the faith to sacrifice even his only son back to God. He was able to obey God because he loved God the most and because he believed in God's omnipotence that transcends even death.

In this chapter, we learn about Abraham's historical, miraculous faith for establishing Isaac's family of faith. Abraham worked with all his strength so that the promise of God would be carried on through his descendants. He carefully took care of Isaac's family foundation with clear spiritual principles so that he could carry on God's promise. When Abraham lived by faith, the servant could also act by faith. Rebekah and Isaac could each make a clear decision to live according to God's guidance with God's promise and take hold on to the blessing of family formation. Let us learn the faith of Abraham and spiritually cooperate so that the life of faith with the promise of God may continue to flow to our next generation, and through them an exceedingly great army of God may be established.

### I. Abraham's faith in the promise of God (1-9).

Verse 1 begins with the words, "Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way." God had richly blessed Abraham in every way. But now it was time for Isaac to take up the baton of God's calling so that salvation history would continue through him. For this to happen, Isaac's marriage problem had to be solved. Isaac was already 40 years old. Abraham knew how important it was to provide Isaac with a suitable wife of faith who, like Sarah, could support him well in the faith of God's promise.

Let's read verse 2: "He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh.." Abraham left nothing to chance or feeling, but did his best and sent out his oldest and most faithful servant with the request to get a wife for Isaac.

Let's read verses 3 and 4: "I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac." Abraham was very serious here and even made his servant swear. This shows how important the issue of starting a family was to Abraham. He had a clear concern that Isaac should not marry a Canaanite woman under any circumstances, but that he should get a

wife from his God-fearing kin in faraway Mesopotamia.

Why was it so important to Abraham that Isaac should by no means marry a Canaanite woman? Surely there were beautiful women in Canaan as well. But Abraham was forewarned by the sons of God in Genesis 6:2-4 who had married only for beauty, lost their spirits, and perished in the Flood. Lot had probably married in Sodom. His wife was so bound to the world that in the midst of God's judgment he lost not only his wife but also his daughters in shameful sins. Through Moses, God later clearly instructed the Israelites not to conspire with the unbelieving Canaanites under any circumstances because they would surely tempt them to idolatry. (Deut. 7:3, 4). In the New Testament, Paul seriously warned Christians not to pull on the same yoke with unbelievers, but to form holy families of faith. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). God's children are to marry God's children. That is why Abraham sent his best servant to get a suitable and godly wife of faith.

The servant of Abraham was ready to fulfill this precious task. But he was worried that the woman would not be willing to leave her home. But Abraham believed that it was not a matter of man, but a matter of God. Let's read verse 7: "The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring I will give this land'-he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there." Abraham firmly believed that God would guide everything according to His will and send His angel before him. God is the almighty God of heaven. This Almighty God had promised and sworn to him that He would give this land to his descendants. God would also guide everything according to His promise, sending His angel for this purpose, so that God's promise could flow on and be fulfilled through Isaac's family.

The goal of establishing a family for the next generation of Abraham was not for Isaac's personal benefit or to fulfill all his desires and

human imaginations. Rather, the goal of family formation in God was that through them God's promise would be carried on and fulfilled. Family formation was already done in paradise primarily for God's glory and for His mission to cultivate and preserve paradise. In other words, family formation is God's sovereign business. God is the founder, the mediator and the goal of the family.

Abraham had clear principles for family formation, namely.

- 1.) Do not marry a Canaanite woman - Isaac was to marry a God-fearing woman who could support him in faith, rather than drawing him to idolatry.
- 2.) Remain in the Promised Land - Isaac was not to return to Abraham's homeland under any circumstances. Fulfilling God's promise and living with God's calling is the non-negotiable goal of life.
- 3.) Marry the woman God prepares - Isaac was not to go in search of her himself with human judgment. He was allowed to trust in God that God Himself has prepared the suitable wife and is leading her to him through his father's servant.

Nowadays, most people think of starting a family as a purely human affair. They think that two people meet and like each other and then start a family. However, as soon as the feeling wears off, they divorce again. In other words, the feeling that comes from the sinful heart cannot be a true foundation of life or marriage. Because people have excluded God from their thinking, listen only to human feelings, and live depending on conditions and circumstances, they have fallen prey to nothingness, so that even the concept of marriage has been perverted. That is why the greatest blessing of God is to establish a family of faith based on the sovereign will of God, according to the guidance of God, and for the promise of God.

We learn here about the life of Abraham that was built on the promise of God. This promise of God had become the rock-solid foundation of his life. He helped his son Isaac believe in this promise of God and live for this calling of God because of the promise of God.

For 40 years Abraham prepared his son to live with the promise and trust in God. Thus, Isaac was prepared to establish a God-centered and mission-centered family of faith. In this way, God's promise and calling could be passed on to the next generation. Abraham also had many faults. But he carefully took care of Isaac and helped him take hold of life with the promise and mission of God with clear spiritual principles. In doing so, he was not passive, but was very active in taking care of Isaac's family being established under God's guidance.

When Charles and Priscilla Studd established a family of faith, they gave the great inheritance to various missionary societies and served the mission throughout their lives. Eventually, Charles Studd helped his best associate, Norman Grubb, marry his daughter, Pauline, and this house church continued his mission organization, WEC, for the next 30 years.

As a young man, M. Peter decided to follow God's leading with the word Romans 1:17 and marry a missionary who was working in Germany. Thus, their family was set up as one of the influential house churches for the campus mission in Germany. However, he not only lived with the calling of God, but also passed on the vision of God with the faith of Abraham from Genesis 15:5,6 by helping co-workers and next generations to live with God's promise and with the calling grace and to establish God-centered house churches for world mission. Through his example of faith, one missionary decided to take God's sovereign guidance and establish an international family of faith with a man of God's heart. They form a faithful house church that lives with the promise of God and, like Priska and Aquila, boldly sticks its neck out for the servant of God.

Through faith in the promise of God, he prayed for his children to make a decision of faith and be allowed to work together for the mission of God in the midst of misunderstanding and persecution. They were each allowed to form very happy and influential house churches, living with the same spirit

and faith for the world mission. Now God is using them as a blessing for the third generation.

I, too, was allowed to form a blessed house church under the sovereign guidance of God with a woman of faith who loves Jesus the most and lives with the world mission vision. By faith, Sh. Anja was allowed to overcome her human expectation and establish a faith family with a deficient shepherd like me. Through her servant life as a faith mother, God is currently working great miracles in the lives of Sarah and Ezra to take hold on to the promise and work together as spiritual co-workers. Through the establishment of the Faith Family, we may cooperate with God's promise in Genesis 12:2 for the World Campus Mission and see God fulfill His promise and make us a blessing to the students and the next generation. Like Abraham, let us pass on life with the promise of God that our sheep and next generation will take hold on to God's calling grace and form blessed God- and mission-centered house churches.

## II. The Faithful Servant of Abraham (10-56)

The servant swore an oath to Abraham to seek a suitable wife according to his principles of faith. Then he took 10 camels, which he loaded with all kinds of gifts, and set out for Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. Once there, he camped at the well and waited for the women to come to fetch water. As he did so, he prayed for God's guidance with very specific requests. Let us read verse 14: "May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'-- let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." Abraham's servant was a man of prayer. He prayed to God with the specific prayer requests for a servant, devoted mother of faith. He did not rely on his experience or good feeling, but prayed with very specific requests for a helpmate of Isaac. Before he had finished his prayer, Rebekah came from

the city and wanted to draw water at the well. He approached her, "May I have a drink?" Rebekah gladly gave him her pitcher. Then she ran and fetched water for all his camels as well. It was the fulfillment of his prayer.

The prayer of Abraham's servant shows that he was totally dependent on God. When he trusted in God 100%, he was able to experience how God led a suitable wife to him for Isaac. We can also fulfill God's mission so wonderfully when we pray to God and act depending on God. Without prayer, we quickly become overconfident or undertake out of self-confidence and fail in the end. Abraham's servant did not act rashly. According to verse 21, he quietly contemplated her and waited with a praying heart until he would have known whether the Lord had given grace or not. Then he gave a gift to Rebekah and asked her about her family. How glad he was when he heard that she was a relative of Abraham. He bowed down and worshiped the Lord, praising God for graciously accepting Abraham's faith and leading him the right way.

When Rebekah's brother Laban heard about the story and saw the beautiful golden bangles, he immediately invited the man to come and stay at their house after all. He showed a warm hospitality. However, when they were about to eat together, the servant stopped. Let's look at verse 33: "Then food was set before him, but he said, 'I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.'" This verse teaches us his mission consciousness and sense of priority. Although he was very hungry from the long journey, he would not eat or be distracted by anything until he had first accomplished his mission. For him, God's mission was in the first place of his life. Fulfilling God's mission was much more important to him than eating. The servant first told in detail the whole story of Abraham, how he had sent him out, how he had prayed, and how he had finally met Rebekah. He told matter-of-factly and clearly, so that God's guidance was revealed. Then he asked the family if

they were willing to send Rebekah out to be married to Isaac.

Let's look at verses 50 and 51: "Laban and Bethuel answered, 'This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed.'" Based on the servant's detailed story, Rebekah's parents recognized God's guidance. They were willing to send Rebekah out without any further conditions. Abraham's servant bowed down to the ground before the Lord and thanked God for completing the mission. Then he gave Rebekah, Laban and the mother beautiful gifts that he had brought.

When the servant was about to leave the next morning, they asked to keep Rebekah at home for a few more days. But the servant did not tolerate any delay. He did not want to rest or go sightseeing, but only to fulfill his mission to the end. He was a man of mission as 2 Timothy 2:4 says, "No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer." We may also fulfill God's task with such mission consciousness and sense of priority, so that God's salvation work may continue to flow through our one-to-one Bible study, GLEF and master class, and the wonderful promise of God may be fulfilled.

### III. An Efficient Faith Mother Rebekah (52-67)

What can we learn from Rebekah?

1.) She was a diligent servant woman.

When she met the stranger at the well, she was immediately willing to give him water. She also volunteered to draw water for all the camels. Drawing water for 10 camels is a strenuous task. One camel can drink up to 200 liters of water. But she drew water diligently and with joy because she had a servant's heart. She didn't say, "I already have another job." Or, "Someone else can do

that." She served with a joyful heart very devotedly. She even had a heart for camels. She possessed the serving, loving inwardness of a mother of faith.

2.) She was a beautiful and pure woman.

Let's read verse 16a: "The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her." Rebekah was very beautiful. She had not tried to attract the attention of boys by her beauty, but rather had waited for God's time to start a family. She had kept her life pure. Her purity made her a beautiful mother of faith and a blessing to Isaac and her descendants.

3.) She was a woman of decision and mission.

Let us read verse 58: "So they called Rebekah and asked her, 'Will you go with this man?' 'I will go,' she said." Rebekah simply said, "I will go." She made a clear life decision. She had prepared herself in prayer and followed God's leading to marry a man she had never even seen. She was able to do this because she had faith in Almighty God. She could act in this way, no matter what the cost, because she believed that God was the sovereign Lord for her life and for the establishment of the family. Trusting God, she was able to leave her familiar old life, her home, her family and friends, and put her whole life in God's hands and move to Canaan to be used in God's salvation history. Their decision reminds us of Abraham's decision for God's calling. It was a very precious and important decision in God's salvation history.

Rebekah did not try to impose her own idea or will, but made a decision for the best guidance of God in her life. Her goal was not to find her personal happiness through a suitable partner, but to fulfill God's purpose and form a family of faith in the land of promise. This reminds us of the faith decision of our missionaries who denied their cultural boundary and their own imagination and

formed faith families with German shepherds. We have also seen the precious faith choices of M. Pauline and M. Maria who, according to God's sovereign guidance, left their beloved, familiar homeland and renounced their own dreams, founding and even now forming house churches with the missionaries of the next generation with great joy and dedication. God always blesses those who follow His guidance out of absolute trust, no matter what the cost.

Let's look at verse 60: "And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.'" Finally, Rebekah was sent out. The family blessed Rebekah not for her personal happiness, but for God's mission. They blessed her with a great long-term vision that her descendants would grow great and become a nation of millions. They also blessed them with the promise of Abraham that their descendants would have spiritual victory and possess the gates of their enemies. This refers to Jesus' victory over the power of sin and death. Here we see the importance and blessing of the family of faith of the next generation, which is founded on the promise of God.

God is also calling us for His world salvation work with a great vision for 100,000 Bible teachers and 5,000,000 prayer workers. He wants to open up the 1700 campuses in Europe through us and establish 120 bases for world mission. God will surely richly bless the faith decisions of our next generation for the establishment of the families of faith and use them precious as a great influence for His work of salvation in M-world, North Korea, Cambodia, Colombia and to the ends of the earth. Let us follow God's guidance in absolute trust and form influential house churches according to God's word of promise.

Consider verses 62 and 63: "Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he

saw camels approaching." Isaac was a man of prayer. He kept his hour of prayer faithfully every day. Although many young people around him were marrying and seeking their pleasure, he waited very patiently for God's guidance. He was like Adam, who worked diligently with God's mission until God led a suitable helpmate to him. God graciously accepted his faith struggle and gave him wonderful grace to form a blessed family of faith with Rebekah. Verse 67 says that he grew to love Rebekah. First came marriage, then came love. When they trusted completely in God's guidance, they could experience happiness in the family of faith. God used this God-centered house church to continue His redemptive history. God's blessings flowed from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, from Jacob to all the people of Israel, finally through Jesus to all the nations on earth. God bless our men of faith not to act according to the spirit of the times, but to wait patiently for God's time. They will surely form blessed house churches in God's time through which God's blessings can continue to flow for this generation.

Today we especially reflected on Abraham's faith in passing on God's promise of blessing to the next generation. He believed in God's best guidance and helped Isaac take hold on to the blessing of the God-centered and mission-centered house church. It was a very important incident in God's salvation history. Like Abraham, let us hold on to faith in the promise of God and pass on this blessing of God in spiritual cooperation with each other to our sheep and the next generation, that they may form many God-centered and mission-centered house churches, and God's blessing may continue to flow through them in Europe and to the ends of the earth.