

God blesses Isaac's family

Genesis 25:1 - 28:5

Key verses 26:3,4

"Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."

Through the last lesson, we learned about the second generation family foundation for Isaac and Rebekah. Why was this prayer request so important to Abraham? Abraham's life was a life for the promise of God. God's promise was much more important than his own life. Abraham prayed that Isaac's family could carry on the promise of God and let it flow generation after generation. Abraham's servant, Rebekah's family, and finally Rebekah and Isaac all cooperated with Abraham, all holding on to the promise of God. God bless you to have Abraham's faith and vision and to cooperate with God's promise spiritually.

In today's lesson, we learn that Isaac, humanly speaking, looks like a weakling in many ways, but he was truly a man of outstanding faith, as shown by his persistent prayer and by his yielding several times regarding the wells. Isaac was a humble man of faith who accepted many disadvantages in order to remain in the land of promise. He trusted in God's guidance absolutely, obeying God's instructions and living in the land of promise with God's promise no matter what the cost. He believed in God's absolute love for him. God blessed his childlike faith and used him as one of the patriarchs of faith. God give you Isaac's faith in the promise of God and help you to remain like Isaac in the land of promise and be precious used as heroes of faith for His work of salvation for this generation.

I. The Prayer Life of Isaac's Family (25:1-34)

Let us read 25:19 together, "This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac." Isaac, through faith in God's promise and guidance, had started a family with Rebekah. But there was a serious problem in his family: Rebekah was barren. While Isaac's half-brother Ishmael fathered 12 sons, Isaac and Rebekah did not have a single child for almost 20 years (25:12-16). Even his father, Abraham, fathered 6 more children in his old age, who in turn fathered many sons (25:1-4). Without a descendant of Isaac and Rebekah, how would God's blessings continue to flow? During this time, they could have doubted God's guidance for their family and impatiently accused God. But what did Isaac do in this situation? Let us read 25:21: "Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant." Rebekah grew older and older and still remained barren. But Isaac prayed to God patiently and persistently for 19 years, trusting in the promise of God implicitly. When Isaac prayed with the non-abandoning spirit of prayer and out of absolute trust in God, God answered his prayer and blessed Rebekah with the birth of twins.

Not only Isaac, but also Rebekah was a woman of prayer. Let us read 25:22: "The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord." Rebekah was finally pregnant. But her pregnancy did not go smoothly. The twins were already fighting each other in the womb, so she got severe abdominal pain. What did Rebekah do as a result? Did she complain to Isaac? She went to consult the Lord. She came to God in prayer with all her problems and worries.

What was God's answer? Let's look at verse 23: "The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." God said that her sons Esau and Jacob were two peoples. In this sense, her pregnancy had an important significance in God's history. As she contemplated her painful pregnancy with God's vision, she was also able to bear all the pain to bring the children into the world.

Through Isaac's and Rebekah's lives, we see that the life of faith consists predominantly of the life of prayer. They prayed to God persistently and patiently. This persistent prayer comes from absolute trust in God's promise and guidance. Persistent and patient prayer allows us to overcome all uncertainty and misfortune in every impossible situation, and ultimately to personally experience God's answer to prayer and His mighty work. God can be requested by those who persistently pray to Him, and their lives are blessed with many fruits of faith.

There are many examples of faith for this: Zechariah persistently prayed all his life for a descendant, even though he was already very elderly and his wife Elizabeth was barren. He could not help but despair, for in those days barrenness was considered a curse and a disgrace. But Zechariah believed in the sovereign God, who is all-powerful and reveals His glory even in a

barren woman. Although he was so aged, he prayed again and again in the early morning, during the day, and in the late evening for God to have mercy on his wife. Elizabeth also prayed just as persistently and patiently. God heard this prayer and Elizabeth became pregnant and gave birth to the forerunner of the Messiah. St. Monica prayed persistently and patiently throughout her life for her son's repentance. For many years, her son did not seem to change; in fact, he grew worse and worse. It pained Monika greatly that her son did not know what he was doing and how he was on the road to perdition through his lewd and dissolute life. God's heart, however, was moved as Monika prayed persistently with much heartache, tears and, above all, faith. God blessed her prayer abundantly that her son accepted the word Romans 13:13,14 and as a church father exercised the great spiritual influence from generation to generation until the end of the earth. Georg Müller also prayed so persistently until God gave him one orphanage after another and was able to save numerous orphans. I also know a woman who prayed persistently for the salvation of her son for the last five years. He had an incurable disease according to Google. God heard her prayer and gave her grace that her son was not only completely healed, but he also graduated from high school at the top of his class and is even growing up as a disciple of Jesus and one of the Bible teachers for this generation.

With absolute trust in God for making disciples or raising children, let us pray persistently and patiently and experience God's answer to prayer. May God fill us with the persistent spirit of prayer daily through His Word and raise up 10,000 one-on-one Bible study teams, 100,000 Bible teachers and 5 million prayer workers so that Europe will be used as a missionary-sending continent.

II. Isaac stayed in the Promised Land (26:1 - 28:5)

Let us read verses 1 and 2: "Now there was a famine in the land-besides the earlier fam-

ine of Abraham's time-and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar. The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live." A serious famine was coming, like the one in Abraham's time. In this situation, Isaac, arguing that he would have no other way out, could have acted as his father did, leaving the Promised Land and going where there was food and water. In fact, Isaac also wanted to leave the Promised Land and went to live with Abimelech in Gerar, in the southwest of Canaan. There the LORD appeared to him and he gave him direction not to go to Egypt, but to stay in the land of promise. God commanded him to stay in the land of promise even in the time of crisis and to trust in God's guidance and care.

Let us read verses 3 and 4: "Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." Why was it so important for Isaac to stay in Canaan? God's plan was to give Isaac and his descendants all the land of Canaan. He wanted to bless all the nations on earth through him. This promise of blessing had been received by his father Abraham before, but now God also gave it to Isaac personally. It is an amazing event for me. For the sake of this promise, he was to remain in Canaan in spite of famine. Isaac was now to make an important decision of life, either to stay in the promised land by the obedience of faith for the promise of God, or to act according to the situation and conditions. God's direction for Isaac was not to live a materially secure, carefree life in Egypt depending on the situation, but to follow in the footsteps of his father Abraham by holding fast to the promise of God in all circumstances.

How did Isaac respond to God's command? Let's look at verse 6: "So Isaac stayed in

Gerar." He overcame his own imagination and uncertainty of his life and obeyed the word of God. He had a childlike trust in God. His decision to obey the Word of God was a very risky decision and meant many personal dangers and material disadvantages. Nevertheless, Isaac obeyed God absolutely and stayed in the land of promise.

God helped Isaac not to act depending on the situation and circumstances, but to trust in God and His promise in the time of crisis, to learn to live depending on God through faith. God taught him to solve his bread problem by faith instead of looking for a human solution in the better conditions in Egypt. All people have a natural need for security and self-realization. But Isaac obeyed God and stayed in the Promised Land, making God his only security in life. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." We may seek our true help from God alone and seek with clear spiritual priority to have God's promise and God's mission fulfilled. Then everything else will come to us.

William Carey remained in his mission country, India, even though his family was suffering from unbearable poverty and serious illness. His wife kept blackmailing him to return to England. Carey, however, remained in India, trusting in God's sovereign guidance for his family. He believed that God would preserve him and his family and use his gospel work in India very preciously for the salvation of countless Indians. God blessed his childlike faithful faith for the fulfillment of His plan of salvation in India and used his family to give eternal life to numerous Indians.

After the painful martyrdom of her husband just in the early stages of her mission, Elizabeth Elliot could have retired from her mission field. But she stayed in the mission land, continuing her husband's mission work and living with the dreaded Waorani Indians, no matter the cost. She remained in the Promised Land until the end, fulfilling

her mission by faith to lead the hearts of many Indians to Christ.

After successfully completing my master's degree in business administration, I had many options, such as starting a lucrative job with a major corporation or staying on as a research assistant at my university. For me, both options were tempting because I could finally earn a lot of money and start a career. However, God encouraged me with Matthew 6:33 and Deuteronomy 6:5 to make a decision of a life. When I trusted in God's promise and decided to seek first God's kingdom and follow God's guidance with all my heart, soul and strength, God blessed me abundantly in every way. I was blessed to grow into a shepherd especially for our next generation and be used as a shepherd, Bible teacher and as one of the spiritual leaders. He always took the best care of me in every way so that I could stand before God and for God and serve His work as I do today.

Hudson Taylor remained as a missionary in China, even though he lost his daughter, two sons and even his wife because of the diseases there. In the midst of death pains and fiery persecution in China, he held fast his trust in God's sovereign guidance with Mark 11:22, "Have faith in God!" and faithfully fulfilled his China Inland Mission to the death, leading countless lost souls of people to salvation and also raising up numerous missionaries for the China Inland Mission. Thanks and praise be to the Lord who encourages us daily to stay in the Promised Land and fulfill His campus mission. The 1700 colleges and universities are God's promised land for us in Europe. Europe is God's promised land for us for spiritual revival. Let us overcome the COVID-19 pandemic by faith and form 10,000 one-on-one Bible studies at every campus and experience the mighty work of God at every campus. May God help us to form influential life community with the grace of vocation in times of Corona crisis and have the promise of God fulfilled.

Let's look at verse 12: "Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him." God blessed Isaac's decision of faith with a great harvest in the midst of famine. Not only did this solve his hunger problem, but he was able to sell in abundance and became an exceedingly wealthy man. This made the Philistines envious. Therefore, they took the fertile land away from Isaac again and drove him into the desert where there were no wells of water. This was tantamount to a death sentence. Isaac had to start all over again, because the Philistines had blocked up all the wells from the time of Abraham. What surprises these were for Isaac, who lived with childlike absolute trust!

God, however, was with Isaac and made him find water wells again and again. But the shepherds of Gerar quarreled, claiming that if Isaac prospered through God's blessing, the well would be theirs. They wanted to take everything away from Isaac, even the blessing of God that he had just received. What did Isaac do? Did he fight for his righteousness or for his advantage with the people? No! He gave in and let the shepherds of Gerar have the well, calling it 'Dispute'. He kept giving in like a weakling. When he moved on, God blessed him to find water again. This time, too, the other shepherds came and disputed the well with Isaac. Isaac moved away and called the well a 'Quarrel'. Let's look at verse 22: "He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the Lord has given us room and we will flourish in the land." The fact that Isaac called the well 'Wide Space' shows that he always kept and carried the blessing promise of God in his heart and life. God's promise was life to him, indeed everything in his life. He believed in the promise that God would multiply his descendants and bless all nations through them. Through this faith, he overcame all the fears and hatred of the world and led a yielding and blessing life. In this way, he pleased God.

Normally, people think that you have to defend your right by all means and fight for it. Nowadays, if someone voluntarily renounces his right even though he is treated unjustly, he is considered a weakling and is exploited all the more by others. But Isaac's meekness came from his faith in God's guidance. He believed that God was with him and provided for him wherever he went. That's why he experienced Jesus' beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:5, 9)

What was the consequence of Isaac's meekness? He received God's approval. God appeared to him at Beersheba, encouraged him, and renewed His wonderful promise. Afterward, Abimelech, his friend, and his field captain came to make a peace treaty with Isaac. Abimelech recognized Isaac as God's servant. He recognized that God was with him and blessed him. Since he already saw that Isaac and his descendants were becoming very strong, he wanted to make a peace treaty with him quickly. When Isaac did not live according to the worldly consensus, but out of absolute trust obeyed God's promise and lived differently, even this pagan was able to recognize God in Isaac's life.

Thanks be to the Lord that in this passage we have been able to learn to hold fast to the promise of God, even though this may mean misunderstanding and affliction. Many influential men and women of faith in God's history committed their whole lives to God's work of world salvation after meeting Jesus. In the process, they encountered many misunderstandings, rejections, hatred and even persecution. Yet they did not fight back, but endured all evil and trusted in God's righteousness and care. God always used them in the midst of suffering and persecution as patriarchs of the faith who continue to exert great spiritual influence to this day. Let us also walk in the footsteps of faith like the patriarchs of faith, overcoming all afflictions and exerting great spiritual influence on the young people on campus.

Chapter 27 is about passing on the blessing of God's promise to the third generation. Actually, Esau was the older of the two twin brothers. But God had said to Rebekah before they were born that the older would one day serve the younger. Isaac's eyes had grown dim. He also had little spiritual insight and so, according to human tradition, he wanted to bless Esau. However, Rebekah proved to be a good co-worker for Isaac. Out of her spiritual insight, she helped Isaac in the background to pass on the blessing to Jacob, whom God had chosen. She used a ruse to do this by cooking a delicious meal for Isaac and Jacob disguised himself as Esau. Isaac could not recognize his son and blessed him. Thus, through the prayer and practical help of his co-worker, Isaac was able to pass on God's blessing well after all.

As soon as Esau returned from the hunt, all was revealed. Esau wept and hoped to get a blessing as well. But he had already squandered this one before, because he had not highly respected him. Now it was too late for him. Therefore Hebrews 12:16,17 says: "See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears." Isaac finally confirmed the blessing for Jacob (33): "He will also remain blessed." Presumably Isaac now realized why God had provided him with such a strong woman of faith as Rebekah.

When Esau, full of anger, issued threats against Jacob, Isaac and Rebekah, with God's blessing, sent him to Laban in Mesopotamia to find and marry a faithful wife. 28:3,4 say, "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham." It is very important

that we pass on well the blessing of God's calling and promise to the next generation. Isaac's blessing to Jacob was very similar to the promise that Abraham had already received. Isaac was able to bless Jacob with the help of Rebekah, and through him the blessing of God flowed on to all Israel.

A servant of God passed on the blessing of the promise not only to his own children and grandchildren, but to many students and the next generation that they grew into spiritual leaders for the work of God and established God-centered and mission-centered house churches. Shepherd Jochen passed on the blessing of the promise to his bible student and he was raised as a messenger of the Word of God. God encourage us, like Isaac, to properly pass on God's blessing to the hopefuls on campus and to the next generation through Bible study and disciple making that they will be used influentially as faith

patriarchs in Europe and to the ends of the earth.

Today we have learned about Isaac's faith. In the midst of difficulties, crises and persecution, Isaac had a childlike trust in God. He brought his requests to God by praying persistently and trusting in God's sovereign guidance and promise. He personally accepted God's calling and promise, which he had inherited from Abraham, and dwelt in the land of promise through the obedience of faith. When he did not live according to the worldly consensus but obeyed God and faced many disadvantages for doing so, God made him the father of faith. Through his family, the blessing of Abraham flowed on to the children of Israel and eventually to all the nations on earth. Let us hold on to God's promise in all circumstances and be precious used as fathers and mothers of faith in God's work of world salvation.