

Promise

Genesis 24-26

Central Idea: We must demonstrate the same humility and open-handedness that Isaac showed.

Introduction

We get so used to the American way even as Christians. We are sometimes more influenced by our culture than we are by God and His Word. It's a challenge for many of us to see Isaac as a powerful result of faith. When I first read about Isaac, I thought he was a wimp. Instead of fighting for his father's wells which he dug, he just kept moving around. But then I realized something about God's Kingdom and it changed my perspective. The promises of God are not something we can demand or conjure up ourselves, and therefore, we also cannot demand them or control them. Isaac led a life of humility and openness as the embodiment of God's promise to Abraham, and I want to take a look at his life this morning to glean what we might learn about how to be children of the Promise.

Text – Genesis 26:1-5

¹ Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. ² And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring 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."

- I. We must be humble before God as we serve Him.
 - A. The attitude of children of promise should be humble.
 - i. As we look at Isaac's life, we are reminded that his very life is a miracle of God, a promise that became a reality not by his parents' abilities, but by God's power.
 - ii. In Genesis 26, just like with Abraham, Isaac is promised these blessings by God. Isaac does not demand them from God as the child of the promise.
 - iii. His whole existence is based on God's faithfulness and blessing. Isaac seems to intuitively get what we fight so much for in our daily lives, that the joy of the Lord is a gift, not an added feature.

- iv. Joy can't be cajoled or made up. Real joy is from the Lord, and it is the gift of the Lord to His children. Isaac's name, which means laughter, shows us that there is great joy in waiting on the Lord to fulfill His own promises.
 - v. We spend so much of our lives trying to control things and make them what we want them to be. We are so unaccustomed to grace that it surprises us even though we've been taught a head knowledge of it all our lives.
 - vi. Even Christians struggle with grace because we are so conditioned to do what we can for ourselves. We try to make grace happen, the promises happen. But that's not our call. God does these things, and our job is to be obedient and rest in these promises and blessings.
 - vii. Isaac seems to understand that. Sure, he makes mistakes along the way, like favoring one of his children over another, calling his wife his sister like his father did, but he stands as one who takes God at his word.
 - viii. **Application:** I can't force God to do anything. All of my life, my existence, my blessings, my abilities, my resources, is completely predicated on a gracious and good God. It's not me doing all of these wonderful things. It's God wanting to do them in me. When we get comfortable with a humility about who we are and what we have, we come close to truly acting in the grace and blessing of God. Until then, we will struggle to have what we already have!
- B. The kindness of children of promise should be noticeable.
- i. Isaac seems to be the kid of guy that's laid back and just takes things as they come. He takes God at His word when He says He will bless Isaac. Isaac has a natural ability to walk in that blessing.
 - ii. Think back to what most have been the most traumatic experience of his life, when Isaac's dad tried to sacrifice him on an altar. That's crazy! Any kid today would be living in the counselor's office!
 - iii. But not Isaac. There is no sense in Scripture that he fought Abraham when placed on the altar, or that he forced anything in his life. In fact, when people stole his wells, he just continued to move until no one was around to steal his wells!
 - iv. Isaac strikes me as the ultimate laid back and open guy. He's genuine, kind and generous. We struggle to be like this child of the promise because we're used to having to act on our own then let God act on our behalf.
 - v. But Isaac is kind and humble. What I have often taken for weakness on Isaac's part as an American Christian is actually what Jesus refers to as meekness.

- vi. Meekness is this quiet strength that rests in God's power rather than our own. It is a waiting on God to act rather than take matters into our own hands, where it is God's to deal with.
 - vii. Isaac has mastered this. He is so trusting in God's promise and takes God at His word of blessing that he just lets God bring that about through time. I love the section where we are shown that Isaac had the same problem Abraham did.
 - viii. Rebekah and Sarah have the same problem. They're both beautiful, but they're both barren. They both have problems with bearing children. Where Abraham struggled in the promise and ended up trying to fulfill it himself, his son learned from his father's mistakes.
 - ix. The Bible tells us almost curtly that Rebekah couldn't conceive, so Isaac prayed for her, and she bore two sons. Wow! Think about that for a moment. Isaac so easily receives the promises of blessing.
 - x. This guy was born of a promise of God, and I think part of his nature and environment are to simply trust God. When he prays, he gets what he asks for.
 - xi. **Application:** We need to be people comfortable in realizing that we can't do God's work. Only He can do His work. Our job is to know Him so completely that when we ask, we ask in His will and name, and He grants out of His generosity, like for Isaac! Our problems start when we question if God can do what we ask or if we try to make it happen on our own rather than on His terms.
- II. We must keep an open hand with all His blessings.
- A. God's blessings are given out of His grace.
 - i. Isaac comes to a place in his life after his sons are born that where he lived was too small for him. Isaac was being greatly blessed by the Lord in all that he did, just as God had promised.
 - ii. He lived in Gerar, the land of Abimelech, whom Abraham had dealt with. And God's blessing was overflowing so much that it crowded out the people of the land.
 - iii. Isaac was essentially kicked out of the land because of his blessing. So he moved from place to place, farther out into the country. This is where he is gracious enough to others around him.
 - iv. The wells that he digs are the wells his father had already dug. These were his wells, belonging to his family, and yet he does not press for his own way and his own wells.
 - v. When someone disputes with Isaac, he simply moves farther into the undiscovered country. He does not allow himself or his family to live with

strife, contention and enmity. These are the names of the wells that were disputed.

- vi. Isaac is the kind of guy who seeks to live in the favor of the Lord, in the peace of the Lord, and so what I took as him giving up his inheritance from Abraham is actually his desire to live in the peace and blessing of God.
- vii. Eventually, he moves far enough out that no one disputes the well he digs, and he calls that well Rehoboth, like the beach, which means, “Room,” or “open spaces.” He sought a place he could dwell in peace.
- viii. **Application:** There’s so much drama around us today, and we need to be people of peace like Isaac. Because God is the one who blesses, there is no need for us to force our way or to fight with others. God’s got our back and He’ll take care of us. But until we learn to dwell in His peace and grace, we will not find it. We need to be people who don’t settle for anything less than peace. It’s no surprise Paul greets everyone in his letters with “Grace and peace to you.”

B. God’s blessings are given to His children.

- i. Because God is the imitator of the blessings, they depend on Him, not on us. We don’t need to demand them, fight for them or make them happen ourselves.
- ii. Isaac lived out a life of blessing before the Lord, and the promised son teaches us who are also children of the promise how to live in that promise, in the tension between promise and fulfillment.
- iii. In Galatians 4, Paul reminds us that Isaac is a child of the promise, a child of Abraham. We also are Abraham’s children because the same faith that Abraham demonstrated in God’s promise of Isaac, we demonstrate in the promise of Jesus’ salvation and return.
- iv. The promises of God are available to us because we are in relationship with Him and because He is a generous God. He blesses us as He wills, and we must not compare His blessings with the blessings others have been given by Him.
- v. We must also learn to be like Isaac in his openness to God’s promises and blessings. Isaac did not hoard these blessings or hold them too tightly. He didn’t keep others from being blessed, but used his blessing to bless others.
- vi. Some people get caught up in what’s theirs and what’s not. The fact is that each blessing and promise belongs to God, and He gives them to us. We must not give them to others who will not value them, but we must not keep them from others who need blessing as well.

- vii. Isaac knows how to be content, how to live in blessing and live in moments of faith. We need to learn this great principle of being content in all things, of seeking God's balance and joy rather than our own desires.
- viii. **Application:** God's blessings are readily available for those who know Him. He blesses as He wills, and we must be good stewards of that blessing. We are not blessed for our own sakes, but so that we can bless others and lead them into the ways of God's kingdom. If we take this approach, we will not hoard His blessings nor will we abuse them. Because they are not ours, but His.

Conclusion

Isaac has so much to teach us about peace in God's will, living with an expectant hope in the promise becoming reality, an openness to sharing God's blessings, and God's grace poured out in our lives. We need to become people who live like Isaac lived, seeking to dwell in the peace of God's blessing despite the storms and strife that rage around us. We need to be those who can bring peace because we know the Prince of Peace! We need to learn contentment in all things and situations. We need to learn how to live in the tension of the promise and its fulfillment.

Action Points

- God's promises are more about God's gracious nature than our rights as Christians. He gave the promises, and we can't force them on our lives.
- God's blessings flow from His generous nature and they are not the rights of Christians, but the kindness of a loving God.
- We should not approach God with pride or demanding things from him, but rather a confidence in His promises and blessing! They are His alone to give.