

Wellsprings of Revival

Part 1 – Hindrances to Revival

Text: Gen. 26:15-35

Introduction:

1. If there is one prominent object associated with Isaac's life, it is the well. With Abraham it was the altar, with Isaac it was the well. This certainly fits the typological picture. Isaac's being offered on the altar of sacrifice is followed by Isaac coming from the well Lahairoi (Gen. 24:62). Then we find him digging wells and discovering "springing water" (Vs. 19). We know that "living water" is a picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37) and the Holy Spirit was poured out following the cross.
2. The name of Isaac is associated with 'wells' seven times in this chapter. "A well differs from a cistern, in that it is the place of running water. What a marvellous hint of the typical meaning of Isaac's well that is found in Genesis 26:19 – "springing water". Water is imperative for the maintenance of the natural life; so, too, is it with the spiritual. The first need of the believer is the "living water", that is, the Spirit acting through the Word." (Pink)
3. The well of springing water typifies the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. John 7:37-39 "In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** (But this spake he of **the Spirit**, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"
4. We will follow the theme of wells as they relate to this period of Isaac's life and the spiritual lessons and applications we can learn along the way. Our outline for this section will be as follows:
 - The Re-Digging of the Wells (Vs. 15-22)
 - The Revelation by the Well (Vs. 23-25)
 - The Reconciliation after the Wells (Vs. 26-35)

I. THE RE-DIGGING OF THE WELLS (VS. 15-22)

A. The Coming back to the Wells (Vs. 15-18)

1. Isaac was not so concerned with digging new wells as he was with getting back to the tried and tested wells of his father Abraham. He knew the life-giving water was there in those wells that would be more than sufficient to sustain and enrich their lives.
2. In this section we see Isaac going back – back to the wells of Abraham his father, back to Beersheba, the place of blessing, back to the tent and the altar and back to fellowship with God. In order to go forwards you have to go back to the basics and back to the place you should never have left in the first place. Some Christians

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stray from the Lord and seem to never fully recover. Both Abraham and Isaac recovered from their spiritual detours!

3. There was wisdom in Isaac's actions. He did not try to innovate and come up with a new method for living in a land with environmental challenges. His method was to **return** to the tried and tested wells of his father Abraham. He knew there was water there. It is a good reminder in our day when there is so much talk about "new methods" in order to know blessing in the modern era. However, in reality, we just need to return back to where the tried and tested sources of biblical blessing have always been – **living, vital contact with the Spirit of the living God in the Word and prayer**. God has not changed! Let us return to:
 - a. The Ancient Landmarks – The Standards of the Word of God. Proverbs 22:28 "Remove not **the ancient landmark**, which thy fathers have set." We are not talking about holding on to empty traditions but to the truths of God's Word. Churches should have no problem diverging from matters of subjective opinion from the past history of the church but should be extremely careful about throwing away the biblically based, tried and tested standards that have served the church well. We sometimes get accused of moving in a particular "direction" in relation to godly standards when in reality we are usually just trying to stick by the ancient landmarks that were established in the beginning.
 - b. The Ancient Paths – The Methods of the Word of God. Jeremiah 6:16 "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for **the old paths**, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*." Both the message and the methods of the Word of God go hand in hand and have not changed. Prayer, preaching and holy living have been mightily blessed of God in the past and still work in the present if we will embrace them with faith.
 - c. The Ancient Wells – The Workings of the Spirit of God. Genesis 26:18 "And Isaac digged **again the wells of water**, which they had **digged in the days of Abraham his father**; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and **he called their names after the names by which his father had called them**." The wellsprings of water symbolize the "living water" of God's Holy Spirit. Total reliance on the Holy Spirit for the Christian life and ministry, total reliance on the Holy Spirit for service, total reliance on the Holy Spirit for the proclamation of the Word of God are just as essential in our time as they were in the great revivals of yesteryear.
4. Warren Wiersbe writes, "The church keeps looking for something new, when all we need is to dig again the old wells of spiritual life that God's people have depended on from the beginning – the Word of God, prayer, worship, faith, the power of the Spirit, sacrifice, and service – wells that we've allowed the enemy to fill up. Whenever there's been a revival of spiritual power in the history of

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the church, it's been because somebody has dug again the old wells so that God's life-giving Spirit can be free to work."

B. The Clogging up of the Wells (Vs. 15)

The problem was not that the water had gone. The supply of water was still there in those ancient wells. The obstacle that stood between Isaac and the life giving, refreshing springs of water was the dirt of the Philistines. In revival there must not only be a return back to the truth but also a removal of the **hindrances** and **blockages** to revival. Like Isaac of old, we need to seek to remove the dirt of the Philistines from our lives so that we can know a greater measure of the Spirit's reviving work in our lives. The hindrances to revival must be removed! Let's consider what this dirt of the Philistines might represent in our lives.

There is:

1. The dirt of a Philistine world – we need to remove the devil's dirt from our lives. The world is the devil's shovel with which he seeks to fill our lives with rubbish so that we will no longer access the living giving workings of the Spirit through the Word. The world is not passive in its promotion of its sinful ways. It is constantly exerting pressure on the believer. Once you are full of the devil's dirt, you will become a dry and discouraged Christian and the devil knows the next step will be for you to give up on the ancient well of blessing and turn to your own broken cistern. Jeremiah 2:13 "For my people have committed two evils; they have **forsaken me the fountain of living waters**, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." If we are going to experience personal revival, it will involve purging our lives of the world's rubbish. For example:

a. **The world's media.**

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- i. Ungodly movies – sin, sensuality and swearing through streaming services such as Netflix and Binge. Dangers on online video giants such as YouTube (approx.. 800 million videos). Temptation through the Television that gets more vile and more wicked with each passing year. The best place to store your T.V. set is at the rubbish dump! Or keep the screen and cut the cable!
- ii. The world's music. You aren't going to know revival in your life if you are filling your ears with the world's music with its sensual sound, rebellious beat and unholy lyrics.
- iii. Ungodly, violent video games – e.g., call of duty, Grand theft auto, Minecraft and Pokémon.
- iv. Social media - Facebook filth, Instagram iniquity, Twitter trash, Pinterest perversity, and Snapchat scum.
- v. The world's news and gossip – magazines, newspapers and online articles that exercise the mind on unwholesome and unholy themes. Not all news is newsworthy!
- vi. The world's literature – slushy romance novels, mysteries and thrillers that encourage lust, wicked imaginations and fascination with the unholy. Watch out for the ones that

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- may have a Christian cover but inside the content is hardly different from the world. Just a book has a Christian label on the outside doesn't mean it has Christian content on the inside!
- vii. Sinning on the Smartphone, lusting on the laptop and corrupting before the computer (e.g., pornography, emotional affairs).
 - b. **The world's mantras (philosophies).** If we don't carefully maintain a biblical worldview on every area of life, we can easily begin to have our thinking shaped according to the world's warped wisdom. Sadly, for many Christians today, their views on many things today have been influenced by the world. You may be surprised at times to find that even professing believers are thinking very unbiblically about the issues of the day (e.g., abortion, euthanasia, marriage, gender & sexuality).
 - c. **The world's materialism.** We need to watch that our lives do not get filled with the world's lust and passion for material things. While it's not wrong to have possessions, just make sure your possessions don't have you! Too much stuff can actually start to affect your spiritual walk!
2. The dirt of Philistine living – we need to remove the dirt of unconfessed sin in our lives as it is a major blockage and hindrance to true revival. A sensitivity towards sin in the life and a readiness to confess and forsake it is a prominent feature of any genuine revival. This is the testimony of the great revivals of history. This requires humility. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray...” (2 Chr. 7:14) Isaiah 57:15 “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a **contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.**”
 3. The dirt of a Philistine nature – perhaps this is the most dangerous of all because it is so subtle and often the activity goes on undetected from the outward appearance of things. The Philistine, Adamic nature can dump a lot of dirt in our lives if we do not keep it at the place of death with the help of the Holy Spirit. subtil sins of the self-life grieve the Holy Spirit and limit His working in us. The kind of sins as those listed in Ephesians 4:30-32.
 - a. **Corrupt communication.** The word ‘corrupt’ means that which is putrid, rotting and worthless. So, the word covers speech which is: **Unholy** - Inuendoes, blue jokes, dirty jokes, deliberate double meanings, swear words, blasphemy, rough talk, toilet talk and idle gossip should never be heard coming from the lips of God's children. **Unprofitable** - The word not only covers speech which is defiling but speech which is ‘worthless’. A lot of time can be wasted on discussions around things which simply do not profit.
 - b. **Bitterness.** The word ‘bitterness’ is derived from the adjective ‘pikros’ that is used of a pointed or sharp arrow; hence it means to pierce, cut & prick. Bitter experiences often lead to a bitter

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spirit if the believer does not carefully guard his heart. It is like a gash or wound which if left untreated will become infected and spread septicemia through the body. Bitter people also cut, hurt, poison and wound others around them. Hebrews 12:15 warns, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

- c. **Wrath & anger.** The two words are basically synonyms with a possible slight shade of difference between the two. The word 'wrath' has been defined as the outward expression of anger, the quick boiling up of anger whereas 'anger' has been defined as a deep flowing anger, the attitude of anger. "The word 'thumos' was more passionate and temporary, that is, anger that boils up, whereas 'orge' was more settled and abiding, a state of anger." (Hoehner) These two words cover both types of anger.
 1. The anger that smoulders away in the heart unseen.
 2. The anger that boils up quickly and is expressed in violent words and actions.
 - d. **Clamour.** The word means "outcry, shouting; the cry of strife; expression of dissatisfaction; noise. It refers to repeated and urgent complaining." "The violent assertion of rights & wrongs, real or supposed." (Moule) Wuest defines it as "the outcry of passion, the outward manifestation of anger in vociferation or brawling."
 - e. **Evil speaking** (blasphemy, slander). Comes from the Greek word βλασφημία. The word is translated elsewhere as Translated elsewhere as 'reviled', 'railed', "evil spoken of" & "to speak evil of". Satan is the master slanderer. Interestingly the word 'slanderer' in the N.T. (1 Tim. 3:11) comes from the same root word translated 'devil'. The word refers to slanderous and injurious speech against both God and man.
 - f. **Malice.** Comes from a broad Greek word meaning 'badness'. Webster defines 'malice as "Extreme enmity of heart, or malevolence; a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification or from a spirit of revenge;" Malice in many ways is the fruit of a bitter, angry heart. Malice is where the attitude of bitterness and anger translates into a desire to injure and get revenge.
4. The dirt of Philistine doctrine – how often the wellsprings of truth and blessing get buried beneath layers of false doctrine. When believers get caught up in the seduction of false doctrine, they often get a false sense of revival. They have discovered a new truth! They've never known such zeal for God in their lives before! But in reality, it is more Philistine dirt that will yield dryness and destruction in the long term. Wrong teaching on the Holy Spirit is also another thing that clogs up the wells of blessing. There tend to be two extremes when it comes to the ministry of the Holy Spirit:
- a. The false fire fanaticism. For example, the emotionalism and excesses expressed in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. People are deceived into thinking they are experiencing the Holy

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Spirit when in reality they are experiencing an excitement and emotionalism that has been worked up in the flesh. The false fires of the charismatic movement prevent millions from experiencing the genuine power of God in their lives.

- b. The no fire of formalism. Some have gone to the opposite end of the spectrum due to an overreaction to the kind of unbiblical extremes described above. They may be doctrinally sound but they are dead and dry because they have practically confined the Holy Spirit's work to a theological textbook. There is no emphasis on prayer for the endowment of power. In fact, they actively oppose it in their misguided, misinformed zeal! They say things like "We don't need more of the Holy Spirit; He just needs more of us." While this statement expresses a partial truth, it also contains a false understanding of the Spirit's ministry. We do receive all of the Spirit's Person at salvation (we are not partially indwelt by the Spirit) but we do not receive all of His power and workings!
 - i. The Apostle Paul believed that the "supply" of the Spirit could be secured through prayer. Php. 1:19 "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the **supply** of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," The word means "to furnish or provide for." "The grammar assumes the closest kind of relationship between their prayer and the supply of the Spirit" (Fee). Regarding the historical background to the word Wiersbe writes, "Whenever a Greek city was going to put on a special festival, somebody had to pay for the singers and dancers. The donation called for had to be a lavish one, and so this word came to mean 'to provide generously and lavishly.' Paul was not depending on his own resources but on the generous resources of God, ministered by the Holy Spirit." The supply spoken of here is not so much the Person of the Spirit as it is the power and operations of the Spirit. We receive the Person of the Spirit at the moment of salvation but we do not automatically receive all of His workings. The gracious workings of the Spirit of God are secured through prayer.
 - ii. This is how we should understand Christ's words in Luke 11:13 "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"
 - iii. How are you going to know the power of God in your life if because of wrong theology you won't even ask God to fill and empower you with His Holy Spirit?
 - iv. Some well-meaning believers are actually guilty of quenching the Spirit in this area. 1 Thess. 5:19 "**Quench** not the Spirit." E.g., preacher who told his audience "There is no overflowing cup".
- c. "There are always people in society who go about stopping good things. Modern day Philistines in religion stop the Gospel with

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the dirt of modernism which denies the Word of God, the virgin birth of Christ, and the vicarious death of Christ – all wells of water for the thirsty soul. Modern day Philistines in society go about stopping streams of wholesome thought by dirty literature and magazines and books. Then there are Philistines in church today who throw the dirt of opposition at every church effort to reach people with the water of life.” (John Butler)

C. The Clearing out of the Wells (Vs. 18-19)

What is the solution to the dirt and rubbish of the Philistines? Very simple. It has to be cleared out by the believer. The Philistines would not remove it for Isaac nor would the dirt go away on its own. Isaac and his servants had to put time and effort into re-digging the wells. The water was still there and available but the hindrances had to be removed before they could know blessing. **True recovery from backslidden living takes time and effort as you deal with the layers of Philistine dirt that have been packed down in your life (personal testimony).** How can we clear out the dirt in our lives so that we can know revival blessings again?

1. Confession – 1 John 1:9 “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Humbling ourselves before God in brokenness over our sin is where the process starts. Psalm 51:16-17 “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: **a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.”
2. Cleansing – 2 Cor. 7:1 “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit**, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” What a striking command! God has made the provision for our cleansing but we must actively avail ourselves of it. We can avail ourselves of:
 - a. The cleansing of the Blood – 1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**”
 - b. The cleansing of the Word – Psalm 119:9 “BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man **cleanse his way?** by taking heed *thereto according to thy word.*” John 15:3 “Now ye are **clean through the word** which I have spoken unto you.” Eph. 5:26 “That he might **sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**”
3. Change – 2 Chr. 7:14 “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Prov. 28:13 “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso **confesseth and forsaketh them** shall have mercy.” True repentance results in a change of life by the power of God. Don’t just confess your sins, forsake them by God’s grace!

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4. The Cross – Gal. 2:20 “**I am crucified with Christ**: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Only the cross is powerful enough to hold the corrupt self-life at the place of death. Romans 6:6 “**Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him***, that the body of sin might be destroyed, **that henceforth we should not serve sin.**” The Holy Spirit is the One who makes this a practical reality in our lives – Romans 8:13 “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye **through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body**, ye shall live.”

D. The Conflict over the Wells (Vs. 20-22)

1. If you get serious about re-digging spiritual wells, be prepared for a fight with the world, the flesh and the devil who will bitterly oppose you!
2. The devil hates the victorious Christian life and will do all in his power to oppose you drawing on the wellsprings of the Spirit in your life. If dumping the dirt of the world on you doesn't work, he will fight you for it!
3. “The devil attacks those who are being enriched spiritually. When a church is successful in doing the work of God, the devil will soon attack. Do not be discouraged if after you have done well spiritually, all sorts of trials and struggles come your way.” (John Butler)

To be continued...

Conclusion: Will you remove the Philistine dirt from your life with God's help and experience a fresh working of the Spirit in your life?

Prayer: “Lord make my life a well of springing water, not only for my own spiritual life and blessing, but that I might be a source of blessing and refreshment to others. Dear God, may the pulpit at NBC be a well of springing water where God's people can come and be refreshed and blessed. Lord, please make our church a well of springing water in a dry and thirsty land. Lord may each one of your children know something of the inner, life refreshing, empowering activity of your Holy Spirit in this place.”