

Genesis 26:1-35

“Well, Well, Well...”

Be it from *temptations w/in* us or *trials around* us, true faith will always be tested. One commentary (Wiersbe) said, “...because a faith that can’t be *tested* can’t be *trusted*.”

& I have discovered that w/*each generation* the tests/*temptations* are made personal. Meaning that if I want to grow in my *relationship w/God*, I’ve got to *experience* God, (His power, His faithfulness, His goodness & His grace) for myself. *It doesn’t matter what those who’ve gone before me, or even what those who may be around me may be going through; though I can learn from them I can’t live off of them. I’ve got to know God, experience Him personally in my life.*

Isaac was the son of a great man of God, but that didn’t make *him* a great man of God, he couldn’t get to heaven on the basis of his dad’s relationship w/God, he would have to encounter & experience God for himself.

It’s true, growing up in a Christian home is a great blessing, but it doesn’t make life easy. I’ve discovered that often times it can create a false sense of confidence in the children (& sometimes in the parents for their children) assuming everything is good because they grew up in church (&/or a Christian home). But they never really encounter God, experience God, or come to know & walk w/God for themselves.

Now at this point in our text we know that Isaac knows the Lord (that’s not the question). However knowing the Lord, & growing *in* the Lord, being *rooted* in the Lord are 2 different things. *He couldn’t glide through life on the tails of his father’s accounts of how God moved in his life. He would have to learn what it means to trust in the Lord w/all his heart, & lean not on his own understanding, but to acknowledge the Lord in all his ways & watch God direct his path. Notice.*

Vs 1

Now this is interesting to me. Because we’re seeing a distinction from the famine in the land from the time of Abraham, but it was obviously severe much like in the *days* of Abraham because that’s the frame of reference. So just *like* Abraham, Isaac decides to move. How many of you realize, *“That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.”*¹ We might throw a NT vernacular on that like this, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man;”*²

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ec 1:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Co 10:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's amazing how many people believe that *their* situation is *different*, that you can't possibly understand nor compare any other "woe" to that which they're going through. Because if you *truly understood*, than you'd agree that they're justified in whatever course of action they've chosen to take in the light of their current circumstance. What Isaac is experiencing wasn't unique unto him; it was something that his dad went through as well...

Now I want to develop that just a little bit farther but before I do here's something else I want to throw in the mix for you to consider. Where was Isaac living at this time? He was in *Promised Land*. Yet that didn't somehow grant him a life apart from trouble, or tribulation, it didn't guarantee him an absence of challenge or temptation... You've been called of God, sealed by His Spirit. But don't think somehow that's going to grant you a life apart from trouble, or guarantee you an absence of challenge or temptation. As a matter of fact Jesus said (Jn 16:33), "*In the world you will have tribulation;*" He didn't say you *might* have it, or if you fall on hard times you *may* have it, it's not a matter of "if" it's only a matter of "when".

I think a lot of times people (preachers included) can be guilty of painting life in Christ as a primrose, problem free path & if you'll just come to Jesus all your problems will be over... That's not true, you're gonna open a whole new can of worms! We don't come to Jesus for a primrose problem free life; we come to Him for the forgiveness of sins & the promise of *everlasting* life knowing that when we pass from this world rather than perishing apart from Him we'll forever worship Him being in the presence of His light & His love, amen?

But back to my previous point, not only are we subject to trials (even though we be in Christ), those trials aren't unique unto us. Abraham experienced a famine, now Isaac is experiencing a famine as well. How many of you can relate to what it's like to experience "dry times" spiritually as you navigate through life as a believer?

Now listen, this is the critical lesson to be learned. We *cannot* allow "dry times" to dictate nor determine our course of direction. Isaac decides that because times are dry for him, something's got to give, something's got to change. & If his circumstances won't move beyond *him*, than he'll move beyond *them*. He picks up & goes to Gerar, Philistine country. Now Gerar is on route to Egypt, sound familiar?

Egypt (in scripture) is not only a literal place; it also speaks of a type (or is an illustration of) the world.

Isaac is allowing this extended period of dry times to move him from his walk of faith & he's on route to the world. Listen, don't return to the world because times may be dry for you (or maybe have been dry for you for an extended period of time) spiritually. How many people do we see who begin well, but never finish? **Things get tough or rough personally, they enter into dry times spiritually so they go back into the world...don't do that. Dry times are not to dictate our course of direction. What is to dictate our course of direction? The Word of God, we're to walk (not by circumstance or feelings) by faith in the word of God.**

Isaac goes to Abimelech (not the same one Abraham visited, that was around 100 yrs earlier, title not name, like Pharaoh), in Gerar.

Vs 2-5

Here's the Word, the warning for Isaac; "Go down to Egypt, & you enter at your own risk, stay in the Land of Promise & I'll bless your life." The son of promise was to stay in the Land of Promise.

Listen, as a child of God you & I are never going to successfully skirt or run away from trials in our lives (especially by retreating to the world). God sees to it that His children learn the lessons of faith & it doesn't matter where we go. Because if you fail the test now, He'll have you retake the test later, so you may as well learn the lesson now. **As children of God our question should never be, "How can I get out of this?" But rather, "What can I get out of this?" "God, what would You have me to learn from this?" Or let's take it one step farther, perhaps it's not for your benefit at all, but it's for His glory, is that ok w/you? What if you don't gain at all, but God is glorified, is that enough?**

I'm reminded of when Jesus, considering the cross, opened Himself up to His disciples & He said, **"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."**³ How often we have a tendency in dry times, in troubling times to cry out, "Father, save me from this hour, this struggle, this affliction." When we would do well to recognize that if God brings me to it, than God will bring me through it; "Father, glorify Your name."

Don't retreat to the world, live in the land of which the Lord has told you. He has bought you, redeemed you at a price, the purchase price of the blood of Christ & you are not your own, we're to honor Him, not serve our own self interest.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 12:27-28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's the easy way out to retreat to the world; you & me... we're not called to *ease*, we're called to *endure* to the glory of God. God says, "Dwell in this land, & I will *be* w/you, & I will *bless* you."

He then repeats the covenant promise. He's going to give to Isaac & his descendants the land, He's going to make of him a great nation (multiply his descendants as the stars of heaven), & Messiah will come through his lineage (in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed).

We'll see God reinforce His word to Isaac again before this Ch is up. It seems that God understands that repetition and reminders are important. If you want your muscles to grow, you grab your weights & do "reps" repetitions. If you want to learn something you do it again & again, if you want to memorize something you repeat it over & over. **It's how we develop, it's how we grow. Also true is the fact that we're (as humanity) prone to doubts & misgivings, we're hesitant to believe things, we're reserved & often times "gun-shy". So in His grace God undergirds His promises to us over & over again.**

He assures us of His forgiveness, the way to forgiveness, of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. These kinds of things are reinforced again & again in the word of God, how we worship Him, walk w/Him & honor Him w/our lives.

God tells Isaac that He's going to honor the covenant & make him a great nation, give him the land & bring the Savior of the world through his lineage. Now what intrigues me about this is the timing of it. God assures him of this fresh on the heels of him heading for the world, ready to leave the land of promise. This Ch resounds w/& is saturated w/evidence of the grace of God toward our lives. It wasn't like he was on a spiritual Mt peak & God really revealed Himself to him. He was headed the wrong way & God broke through & spoke to his heart. We call that grace...

There's another reason God was going to bless his life. Did you catch it? It's in Vs 5. Because Abraham obeyed My voice & kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, & My laws."

Few quick things to highlight here. On the one hand God's work in our lives is all about grace, yet we do well to recognize that it's undeniable that God honors obedience. One of the ways He seems to honor it is in how our faith can affect our family. There are times that God will honor &/or bless your children due to *your* obedience & the fact that you honored Him w/your life. It's almost as if I can give my children an edge spiritually, if I will honor God whole heartedly.

That doesn't mean they don't have to choose Christ personally (as we mentioned earlier), but your obedience to God's word will somehow & in some way bless & benefit them. Now a study of Abraham's life reveals that his obedience wasn't perfect, yet God honored it nonetheless, that means that your/my obedience may not be perfect either, yet God sees our heart & will honor it nonetheless.

Now God talks about charges, laws, commandments & statutes, yet the law hadn't been given yet, what gives there? The point is that when God spoke to Abraham, he actively obeyed His word. He was justified (declared righteous) by faith & his faith was made manifest through his obedience to the word of God.

So God blessed Isaac for Abraham's sake, & He will bless you for the sake of the obedience of the One Greater than Abraham; even J.C.

Vs 6

You should know that even though Gerar is w/in the promised land, it's not too far from Egypt & living among the Philistines would bring him unnecessary turmoil. We might say he's "living on the edge". This is that situation where like you, like me we want to know how close we can get to the education, the ethics, the entertainment of Egypt & still be in the Promised Land, we're obeying technically, but in reality we'd prolly rather be doing something else.

Vs 7-11

Can I just say that it's never good when the ungodly rebukes the godly due to their lack of integrity or willing deceitful activity... The apples doesn't fall too far from the tree does it? No doubt Isaac heard of Abraham's situation growing up & what *he* did, now, finding himself in a similar situation he employs dad's tactics.

We discover that he lies because he's afraid of what will happen to him when they find out this beautiful woman is his wife. The bible declares, *"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."*⁴ It's interesting isn't it, that when God promised him safety, he doubted it, therefore lied. But now that Abimelech promises his safety he feels secure (even though he considered them potentially murderous adulterers). Often times we prone to trust in what seems tangible rather than the untouchable, but God would have us to trust in His word to us.

Isaac had been taken to the Mt top (spiritually speaking) by God when God broke through to him & assured him of the covenant.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (Pr 29:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Then he fell into this blatant sin, lying about his wife... Unfortunately, to be honest w/you, it's not incredibly uncommon to go from a spiritual high point to a total lapse of faith. God speaks to him, assures him He's going to bless & be with him, than he lies to Abimelech about his wife. Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the Living God, a revelation of the Father directly to his heart, minutes later he's being told, "Get behind me Satan, for you are an offense to me." He's drawing near to the Lord at the last supper, than denies 3xs that he even *knows* the Lord before the night is over.

I think that spiritual highs can at times give us a false sense of confidence, we begin to think we're "all that". Jesus said, "*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*"⁵ Paul echoed that like this, "*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*"⁶ This is one more reason (isn't it) that we rejoice over the fact that *righteousness* is of faith & not of works, it's based upon the work of Jesus & not the work of Jeff (in my life).

Vs 12-14

Do you see what I mean when I say that grace gushes forth from this Ch? He's headed the wrong way, God intervenes (that's grace, God does that w/us). He blows it by lying about his wife rather than trusting in the Lord, the next year he sows & he reaps 100 fold. Is it because he was living right & firing on all cylinders in his life? No, it was because of God's grace in his life. It was God's goodness that was highlighted, not his. Now again he was a believer, loved God, not taking away from that. What we're doing is highlighting God's goodness, not man's.

He was also blessed for Abraham's sake, just as we're blessed for Jesus' sake. Only heaven will reveal how much our lives were blessed because of the spiritual investments made by godly friends or family who have gone before us.

He sowed, & he reaped. Can I just tell you that if you *don't* sow, you'll never reap. There was a famine, dry times, even still he sowed, made an "investment" of sorts & God blessed it. Now He blessed Isaac materially, we're not guaranteed that, we're guaranteed a spiritual blessed (though God can bless materially should He so choose). But here's the point I'm seeking to stress, you've got to sow, or you'll never reap. Be it in business, a relationship, marriage, friendship &/or the kingdom of God. You've got to invest *into* it if you're ever going to receive a benefit *from* it. Stop sowing, the ground grows fallow.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 26:41). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Co 10:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You want things to grow, you've got to sow... If you want to see people come to know the Lord, you've got to sow the seed of the gospel, you want to see the grow, sow the seed of God's word. If you want things to grow, you've got to sow... take the time, make the investment.

You might also note that Philistines envied him. It created problems because he was living too close to them. Living on the edge isn't a good place to be. It doesn't mean that grace isn't there for you, or that God won't bless you, but it does show a lack of wisdom on our part. He's going to experience more troubles due to his decision to live there.

Vs 15-17

& Just like this, those who don't understand grace will look at you & say, "It's not fair that you're blessed, I know that you fell. I heard what you did, I know where you've been." & They dig up dirt to try & stop the flow of God's forgiveness & grace toward your life.

Now Isaac didn't battle, but he didn't move too far either. He just went down into the valley.

Vs 18-19

We want to notice a couple of things here. #1 Isaac is navigating through life here; & in order to do that he's digging up some of the wells that his dad had used before him. What that means is that he's not above learning from others, he's drinking from a well that someone else had dug prior to him. He doesn't have to discover the resource for himself, he'll receive from what others have done & benefit from that. Some folks have to learn everything the hard way, figure it out for themselves. What we need is a teachable spirit. We need to have a heart that will receive from the work that others have put in before us & then press forward from there.

But there's another powerful illustration here & that is this. Isaac dug this well, & that well, & the other well gaining from the resources that sustained a previous generation. One of the problems w/churches today is that we're always looking for new ground, some fresh source from which to be sustained. Yet the resources that sustained the previous generations are still available & just as able to sustain us today if we will just seek them as Isaac did; w/faith, work & commitment.

The well of peace, the well of power, of grace, wisdom, & transformation are just as available to the believer today as they were the believers of every generation prior to us. The question is whether or not this present generation will have the faith, the work, & the commitment to dig the wells again.

Of course we know that the bible likens water to the Person & power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to the waters of God's word that wash over us. We note in Vs 19 they discovered a well of "Living Water". *How we need to tap the resources of the living water of the word of God that's available for our lives. How we need the torrents of living waters flowing into & out through us via the power of God's Spirit in our lives. May God help us to lay hold of the resources He's availed to us in the well of His word.*

Vs 20-23

Hey, don't be surprised when you get serious about seeking the Lord & tapping the resource of Living Waters & the enemy comes & contends w/you. The enemy will always strive against you, your flesh will always strive against you, you see even when he found the well of living water, it wasn't smooth sailing. There was striving, quarreling, contention. When you're filled w/the Living waters of the Spirit of God, challenges will follow, mark my words.

But don't give up, don't give in, keep pressing on, Rehoboth will come. God will give you the victory & you will be fruitful to His glory. Keep digging, your Rehoboth awaits.

*I like the fact that rather than strive w/them he just moved on from them. He didn't have anything to prove, God was going to take care of his life. In reality it seems that God used it to create space between him & the Philistines (as it should've been in the 1st place). Paul said, *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."*⁷ Isaac didn't contend nor confront, he just pressed on until he was where God wanted him to be.*

Vs 24-25

I'm certain that Isaac was worried/afraid, not knowing what would happen w/all the contention between his herdsmen & the Philistine herdsmen. But God said, "Do not fear" not because he was so strong or better able to defend himself, but because God was w/him & would watch out over him.

So Isaac built an altar (meaning he worshiped God), pitched a tent (meaning he recognized this world wasn't his home, he was just passing through) & he called on the name of the Lord (he had a church service). & There his servants dug a well, life giving waters...

Vs 26-31

Now the king of the Philistines is coming to him; & he's saying, "Why are you coming to me? I know you hate me."

⁷ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ro 12:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He's all, "We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you." I LOVE that statement. Oh that that would be the testimony of my life, of your life, of our lives. That the unbeliever looking on & over our lives could see clearly that the Lord is w/me; is w/you. They came to him because they could see that God was w/him. That's who we want to be.

Jesus said that like this *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*⁸ I pray that it would be obvious to unbelievers looking on that God is with you, because they can sense & see Christ *in* you.

Vs 32-33

God just keeps Isaac in a continual supply of water. There is an abundant supply of power available to you in the Person of the Holy Spirit, God has supplied more provision than you will ever have need.

Vs 34-35

Esau abandoned Abraham's example & married Canaanite women. He was unequally yoked & it caused nothing but grief to his godly parents. Esau is showing his cards as a fornicator & profane person as Heb 12:16 declares.

Listen, Abraham's life was marked by altars, Jacob's life will be marked by tents, Isaac's life is marked by wells. God has ample resources available to you & me. The well of peace, the well of power, of transformation, the Living waters of His word & of His Holy Spirit, tap the resource & God will bless your life.

Prayer Points:

God teach us to lay hold of all that You have for us by faith, not being afraid to sow, to commit to seeking You diligently, to pursue You whole heartedly. Change our lives, have Your way in us completely.

If you don't know J.C. that's where it begins for you personally. At the well of salvation, drink from the waters of life & you'll never thirst again. God wants to forgive you of your sin, to wash you clean, come to J.C. for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.