

GOD BLESSED ISAAC'S FAMILY

(Isaac bore God's blessing by faith)

Genesis 25:19–28:9

Key Verses: 26:3a, 6

“Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you.”
“So Isaac stayed in Gerar.”

The Almighty Creator God established the first family between Adam and Eve. He blessed them to rule over his creation. But they disobeyed God and lost the paradise and all God's blessings.

However, God so loved the world that he promised to give his Messiah to crush Satan's head and save men (Gen 3:15). To send this Messiah, God chose Abraham and his descendants.

Today's passage is about Abraham's son Isaac. He was born to carry on God's redemptive history. But he was too weak for this task. However, God blessed Isaac in so many ways that he could maintain and pass on God's blessing to Jacob successfully.

First, God established Isaac's family (C24). Isaac means laughter. It was because Sarah laughed when God said she would have a baby at 90 years old. (Yes, Sarah was older than M. Sarah Barry!). Then Isaac became the source of joy (Laughter) for her and for all. It was a great blessing for Isaac to grow up in Abraham and Sarah's household. For instance he learned **“Jehovah Jireh”**—**“The Lord will provide”**, on Mt. Moriah (Gen 22:14). Such experiences must have become unforgettable resources for him to live a life of faith.

Likewise our second generations' childhood under believing parents must be priceless blessings from God!

In C24 God established a beautiful house church between Isaac and Rebekah. It looked impossible. But it became possible because God blessed Abraham's faith, his servant's prayer and Rebekah's decision of faith. Of course Isaac must have trusted in God, **“Jehovah Jireh”**, **“The Lord who will provide.”** We cannot go over all the details but it is worthwhile to review Abraham's faith even briefly. Abraham said, **the wife must not be among the Canaanite women but among his relatives in Paddan Aram.**(C24:3-4), that is, among believers in

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God. (2 Cor 6:14-18). But **“what if the woman is unwilling to come to this land?”**

asked his servant. Abraham answered him definitely; **“Make sure not to take Isaac back there”**(v6) even though Isaac might live as a single man forever. But such a thing would never happen. For Abraham believed in God Almighty as V7 says, **“The Lord swore to me 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!’”** Here Abraham believed God's promise for an offspring (the Messiah) through his descendants. To fulfill this redemptive purpose God would surely give Isaac a woman of faith. Abraham knew that Isaac's marriage should not be just like a worldly marriage; a man and a woman get married, have children, eat, drink and die. It is rather the two become one to serve God's purpose, to bring God's Messiah that all people on earth may be blessed.

So what happened? God really blessed the faith of Abraham and the servant's prayer. He allowed Rebekah, a beautiful woman who had such faith to be a mother of many nations.

One 2nd gen young man graduated from high school and met a very intelligent, charming Chinese girl in the scholarship award meeting for early Harvard accepted students. He was so excited and bragged that she proposed to him. But his parents were alarmed because she was not a believer. They could not stop the relationship because it would only make him more rebellious. So the families decided to pray to God as a matter of life and death with crying tears, day and night. Before long the young man said that he ended the relationship with her because she was too physical. Praise God who answered tearful prayers. Then God immediately blessed him with a beautiful woman of God. Now he confesses that one of God's best blessings in his life was his decision not to marry a Canaanite woman but to marry a woman of God.

May God bless all our children as God blessed Isaac and Rebekah! Now let's learn what Isaac and Rebekah's house church was like.

Second, Isaac and Rebekah prayed(C25:19-34): Look at 25:20. Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. Though Isaac was God's chosen covenant bearer, he had a severe family problem more serious than most families. Like Sarah, Rebekah was barren. Isaac had no child until he was 60 years old. How did he solve such problem? He could have complained to God or blamed Rebekah's

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barrenness. He could easily have had his own solution, a concubine as Abraham had done. However, Isaac was different. He must have learned from his father's failure. Isaac chose to pray to God on behalf of Rebekah. (v21). In that polygamist society he loved and was faithful to Rebekah. His prayer was not for just a few days or several months or years then give up in despair. How long do we pray with one prayer topic before giving up? In my case I secretly prayed for seven years to give me a wife who loves God more than me. Then God answered! However, Isaac's prayer was very persistent for 20 years though Rebekah's stomach never became bigger. He may have prayed even more years but God blessed his sincere prayer of faith in God's time. God gave not just one but two babies! More than that, God said, **"They will be two nations!"** (Surely each of our second generations will also be a big nation in God!)

How was Rebekah's faith? Rebekah must have had great joy to be pregnant at around 60 years old! But soon she began to have unbearable pains. It looked like her baby was doing Taekwondo kicks in her small stomach. But she had no idea saying, **"Why is this happening to me?"** So what did she do? She couldn't get an ultra sound check. Rebekah rather went to inquire of the Lord! Then the Lord quickly answered her, **"Two nations are in your womb,...and the older will serve the younger"**(23). It shows that Rebekah was a woman of prayer who prayed for everything including her pains in pregnancy. In this way Isaac and Rebekah were a praying couple over big and small things in their family life (1 The 5:18). And God is pleased and blessed their house church!

Third, God blessed Isaac's social life (26:1-35) Here we see how God helped Isaac to have his own **independent faith** in God. Look at 26:1. It began with a severe famine in the Promised Land. Isaac's moving to Gerar looked imperative. Furthermore he was ready to move to Egypt as Abraham had done once.

But God intervened at this moment of his spiritual crisis.

Let's read 26:2-4 **"The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 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.'"**

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Until that time Isaac lived under Abraham's umbrella of faith. But now God appeared and commanded, **"Don't go down to Egypt! Stay in the Promised Land!"** (Here Egypt was the symbol of the ungodly world.) Then God would bless him as he did to Abraham; **"All nations on earth will be blessed through your offspring!"** Here God's command and promises were an open-ended calling. Though Isaac was God's chosen covenant bearer already, God did not force him at all. He rather commanded him with the same blessings, leaving Isaac to choose to obey. Surely at one moment of our life each of us must make his own decision independently. God wants each of us not to follow him just because of his parents' or shepherds' faith. God wants us to make a personal decision to belong to his redemptive history at any cost.

How did Isaac respond to God's word? Look at v6. **"So Isaac stayed in Gerar."** Isaac simply obeyed God's word and stayed in Gerar!

Here we see Isaac's personal faith in God in a difficult time. His faith was based on the word of God just like Abraham. He denied his own smart ideas by trusting in God more. He believed that God would be with him and bless him in the middle of the famine stricken land.

However God's promises were beyond his immediate needs such as food and water in famine. God confirmed his oath to Abraham that the Savior of the world would come from his descendants to be a blessing for all nations and God would make Isaac a great nation and his name great!

However, the immediate result of obeying God's word was very costly. He almost lost his beautiful wife in Gerar. For the town he had to live was very immoral, violent and lawless in addition to the economic depression. As the saying goes, "like father, like son"; he lied saying that his beautiful wife Rebekah was his sister. However, the Almighty God kept his promise. He protected him through Abimelek. One day Abimelek saw from his window that Isaac was caressing Rebekah and was actually his wife not sister. Then Abimelek severely rebuked Isaac for his deception. Yet by God's grace he pronounced that whoever touched Rebekah would be killed.

More than that God blessed Isaac exceedingly when he sought God first. Let's read vs 12-14. **"Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped**

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a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him.

How great is God's blessing for him who absolutely obeyed God and his word ahead of everything!

When I was working in the Korean Embassy in Mexico from 1982-1985, I was engaging in several one to one Bible studies using lunch time, Saturday and Sunday. Then one day the ambassador called me. He said, "I see you want to do two things at the same time; Embassy work and God's work. But choose only one! For there are so many brilliant young people who want to be successful diplomats around you." He pressed me so hard to choose one that I felt I must choose Egypt leaving my mission in Mexico. At that crucial time, the Lord reminded me of Matthew 6:33. So I decided to seek God's kingdom first, while working harder than before for Embassy work. At that time my ambassador had a golf appointment on every Wednesday. After he left one by one the other diplomats left too and came back before the ambassador came. But one day the ambassador came back early at 12 noon. He saw me alone in the office. Soon he recommended me to be promoted among so many competent diplomats. He saw that a God believing diplomat is truly trustworthy. Thus God blessed me both of my ministry as well as my career when I obeyed God's word.

Now let's look at Isaac again in 26:16. Though God blessed him so abundantly, his social life was terrible. Out of jealousy and envy Abimelek expelled him from Gerar. Isaac and his servants needed water desperately for many animals so they had to dig wells in the dry land. But whenever he found a well, the Philistines claimed it as their own! This was repeated again and again. Isaac could have fought against them with many servants and abundant materials. Yet he didn't. He just named the well as Esex (contend) and Sitnah! (Quarrel). He moved again and dug another well. Then no one harassed him. Finally he called it Rehoboth! **"The Lord gave us room to flourish!"** Isaac could yield not fighting with non-believers because he believed in **"Jehovah Jireh"**, **"God provides."** Yet Isaac further went to Beersheba (Well of the oath) where Abraham once made a treaty with Abimelek and bought it as his well with an oath.(Gen 21:31)

That night God visited him again. Let's read V24, **"That night the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be**

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afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.”

God knew Isaac was very afraid by the endless attacks of the hostile enemies. So God comforted him, saying, **“Do not be afraid, for I am with you, I will bless you.”** He reconfirmed his covenant to increase the number of his descendants for the sake of Abraham.

So Isaac was greatly encouraged. He built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD as his God, God of Isaac, out of deep thanks and adoration to God.

Now let's see v26. Meanwhile Abimelek came with his men and the commander of his forces. Isaac must have been startled and asked, **“Why have you come to me?”** But what did they say? Let's read V28. They said, **“We saw clearly that the Lord was with you; let's make an agreement of peace.”** It seemed as if Isaac was a constantly losing victim -- an underdog in that dark society. But he was not! God gave him final victory over all his enemies not by fighting but by conceding. How could this happen? It was because God was with him and blessed him. Abimelek also observed Isaac very carefully. He never saw such a person who was conceding endlessly. He was also surprised to see Isaac became more prosperous each time he was losing. Finally he could see clearly that God was with Isaac.

What happened to Isaac is really happening in every fields of our daily life. If we fight back and claim all our rights and never lose, we may win humanly but lose spiritually. However, if we concede, we will lose humanly, but will gain man's souls. Most of all God's name is highly honored through us, men with God.

May God make us and our second generations like Isaac not to fight but concede so that we may glorify God in our working place until people around us say, **“We saw clearly that the Lord is with you!”**

Fourth, God helped Isaac to pass on God's blessing to Jacob (27:1-28:9)

Hebrew 11:20 summarized Isaac's greatness in one comment saying, **“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.”** It means Isaac did many great things but what was the most important before God was his passing on God's blessing to the next generation. But it was done also by God's help through Rebekah's spiritual support. See 27:1. **“Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak**

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that he could no longer see.” He became blind not only physically but also spiritually. He liked his first son Esau who was manly; catching and cooking his game for Isaac. So Isaac wanted to bless him before he died. Now all that his life had achieved was at stake.

What happened then? As Hebrew author said, by faith Isaac successfully passed on God's blessing to Jacob. The detailed story is in C27. But it was only possible because of the suitable helper Rebekah. She helped Isaac as a matter of life and death so that he could fulfill God's plan for his house church.

Today we learned how God blessed second gen Isaac in so many ways. First of all God blessed him to grow up in Abraham and Sarah's household. Next, God established a beautiful house church between Isaac and Rebekah. They were not perfect but with many weaknesses. However when Rebekah was barren, Isaac prayed for 20 years for her to be fruitful.

Later when Isaac became blind, Rebekah covered his weaknesses as a matter of life and death. Thus their house church could pass on God's redemptive history properly.

It was God who blessed them in so many ways that the Messiah could come through them to bless all people on earth. May God bless our second generations to establish beautiful house churches and let them help each other like Isaac and Rebekah to bring Jesus to the world!