

Date : 26 March 2023
Theme : The men who walked by faith
Topic : Isaac's journey of faith: Entering into God's delight
Passage : Genesis 26
Key Verse : *"Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him."* Genesis 26:12

Introduction

God introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (*Exodus 3:6*), and we who are in Christ Jesus become part of the Abrahamic covenant and blessings. This is the God who is loving and full of commitment toward those who are in covenant partnership with Him by His divine grace and patience.

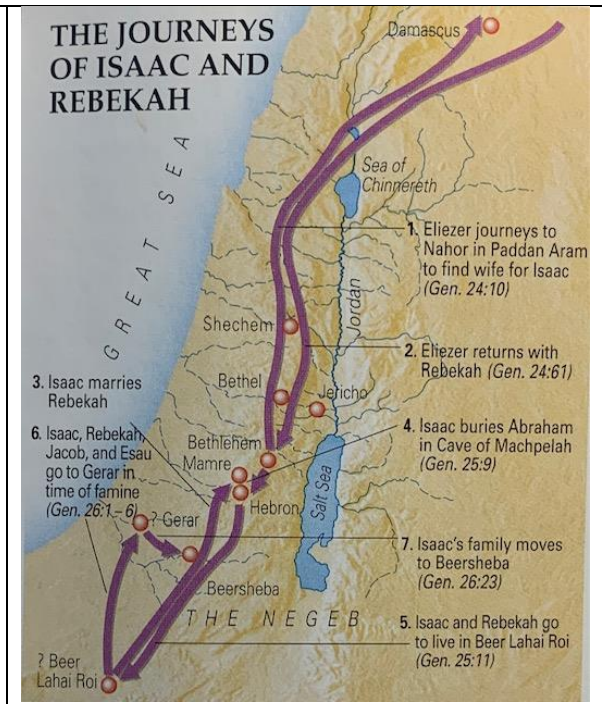
Isaac serves as a beacon for believers who would serve God loyally. Today, we will look at Isaac's journey of faith – looking at how he entered into God's delight – and draw valuable lessons, from which we can emulate with the following blessing of God's favour upon our lives, just like Isaac inherited it.

The Lord blessed him a hundredfold. Yes, the favour of God upon Isaac could be ours too when we are in a covenant partnership with Him.

1. Who is Isaac?

- Isaac is the son of promise
 - The promised son God made to Abraham and Sarah. Born to them when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 years old. His birth was miraculous in that it was physically impossible for Sarah to have had a child (*Genesis 18:11*)
- Isaac's Obedience
 - His meek obedience to be the object of sacrifice to the point of death was exemplary
 - Married at 40 years of age to Rebekah, upon receiving an account of God's divine arrangement [his father Abraham had instructed the chief servant Eliezer to find a girl from his own relative at Haran in Paddan Aram and how God did the rest (*Genesis 26:40; 50; 66-67*)]
 - The Lord appeared to him at Gerar, instructing him not to proceed to Egypt but to dwell there and he obeyed (*Genesis 26:3*)
- Isaac's prayer and worship life
 - He is one who meditates (*Genesis 24:62-63*) and prays (*Genesis 25:21*).
 - Prayed for Rebekah who was barren and became father to Esau and Jacob at age 60 years.
- Isaac is a Patriarch of the Old Testament
 - One of the four great men in Genesis. Isaac played a pivotal role as the 'son of promise' to receive the Covenantal blessing and pass it on to his generation through Jacob.
 - God refers Himself as God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and therefore Isaac is to be honoured.

- Isaac's dwelling
- Isaac grew up in Beersheba. [Journeyed 3 days with his father Abraham from Beersheba to Mount Moriah for the 'sacrifice of Isaac', after which they returned to Beersheba (**Genesis 22:19**)]
- Later lived at Beer Lahai Roi in the Negev (**Genesis 24:62**) [At 40 years of age, by God's design he married Rebekah "in the tent of his mother Sarah" (**Genesis 24:66-67**); who died 3 years earlier (**Genesis 23:1**)]
- After his father's death, Isaac (at age 75) moved back to Beer Lahai Roi.
- Because of famine, Isaac moved to Gerar and then to Beersheba (**Genesis 26**).



2. How Isaac was in God's delight

From **Genesis 26**, we see a progression in Isaac's walk of faith in God.

Isaac in the delight of God, was blessed with the favour of God and given a '*spacious place*' from where he found '*room to flourish*'.

(a) Isaac obeyed God not to go to Egypt

There was a famine in Canaan which caused Isaac to journey from Beer Lahai Roi (**Genesis 25:11**) to Gerar where Abimelech, king of the Philistines lived (**Genesis 26:1**). The town of Gerar lies in the southern tip of the land of Philistines, and is the point to connect to the highway to Egypt. So, Isaac was heading to Egypt.

God appeared and instructed him: "**Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live**" (**vs2**), and reiterated His promises (**vs 3-5**).

- In faith, Isaac stayed in Gerar (**vs 6**)
 - Isaac bucked the trend by not following the crowd to go to Egypt which was the natural thing to do, as Egypt was the breadbasket of the ancient world
 - At Gerar where God told him to dwell, "**Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him.**" (**Genesis 26:12**)

➤ Learning Point:

God has plans for our good, to prosper and not to harm us. When we obey God's instruction to go or to stay, we can be assured of his presence to lead and guide us.

Q: Will you keep faith and always seek God when making major decisions in life?

[As a young man launching out into my career, there were two specific instances when I was gripped with uncertainty and fear, but God's timely word gave the assurance for me to proceed... to live in my faith in God and trusting Him, and not to live in fear. Looking back at my life in the past decades that followed, I can testify that my God is faithful.]

(b) Isaac handled men's rejection in closing his wells by believing that God would open doors

- Isaac remained peaceable in spite of oppositions

When the Lord blessed him with a hundredfold and he became very wealthy, the Philistines envied him and closed up the wells servants of Abraham had previously dug. Abimelech told Isaac: ***“Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.”*** (vs 16)

- Isaac complied and moved down to the Valley of Gerar
 - At the Valley of Gerar, he re-dug the wells that his father had used previously and discovered fresh water. Water is vital for his people, his crops and his livestock (*Remember: there was famine in the land*). In two instances, herdsmen of Gerar quarrelled with him and took over the wells (vs 20-21)
 - Isaac moved on, naming the place Esek (contention) and Sitnah (opposition)
- But the third well he dug, no one quarrelled over it, and the well provided him and his flocks and herds plentifully.
- Isaac testified of God's goodness
 - God's favour gives him ***‘room to flourish’*** and he named the place Rehoboth, declaring, ***“Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land.”*** (vs 22)
 - When God opens doors, no one can shut: It shows that no one can take our space or sphere of prosperity – God is able to provide our space (***Rehoboth means “room to flourish”***)

➤ Learning Point

Rather than start a huge conflict, Isaac went for peace.

- Live at peace as far as it is within your means
 - Ask God for wisdom to know when to fight and when to move on for the sake of peace
 - Isn't it true for us - there are those who want to block our progress in life? They may operate in our workplace and even in our ministry, like the jealous herdsmen of Gerar who put dirt in the 'well'. Never allow them to kill our faith!
 - How should we respond?
 - Isaac did not fight for possession of the property, but neither did he give up. He dug another well. The meek will inherit the land, but in God's good time. God took delight in Isaac as a peacemaker and lavished favour on him with a ***‘spacious place to flourish’***

(c) Isaac's faith strengthened: he prioritised the godly things like meditation, worship and honouring God

- Putting God first
 - Isaac now has God's blessings overflowing. But all these material wealth no longer seem as important to him as much as his allegiance to God which now takes precedent.

- Having been blessed at Rehoboth with an open space to flourish, Isaac immediately took off for Beersheba (about 32 km away)

[Note: Beersheba is “well of the oath” first mentioned in **Genesis 21:14**. It was at Beersheba that Abimelech made peace with Abraham because he saw God was with him (**Genesis 21:22–23**), and **“Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time” (Genesis 21:33–34)**]

- Beersheba was where Isaac grew up, from where he made the journey to Mount Moriah and where he returned to after the aborted ‘sacrifice’ because God provided a substitute (**Genesis 22:19**).
- God’s approval
 - This surely pleased the Lord God and he was met with God’s approval - for that very night the Lord appeared to him again (as it was *in vs 2*), to confirm the promised covenant **“I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be 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.” (vs 24)**
- An Altar unto the Lord: Covenant Partnership
 - At Beersheba, Isaac **“built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord. There he pitched his tent and there his servants dug a well.” (vs 25)**

➤ Learning Point

When Isaac honoured God, God honoured him. After Isaac built an altar unto the Lord, his servants dug another well at Beersheba, and once again they found water (when the presence of God is with you, the blessings simply flow). The blessing is obvious to all around – they saw God was with Isaac.

- God is glorified when others can see that God is with us
 - Those who envied him now fear him because they saw that God was with him, and therefore desired a treaty of peace (**vs 26-31**).
- There came a stately visit: **“Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces.” (vs 26)** to make peace
- When God is with us, who can be against us? Put God first and strive to obey Him.

Application

1. When others look at your life can it draw attention to the Blessor? Can they say something like you are peaceable, easy to get along with, considerate?
 - If yes, relate this in your small group with a heart of thanksgiving.
 - If not, what needs to change in you so as to turn the tide around?
2. What can you learn about Isaac’s
 - (a) spiritual habits (**see Genesis 24:63; 26:25**), and
 - (b) world view and decision making?