

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
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St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 19

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 26

INTRODUCTION

This chapter features the life of Isaac. Nothing much is written of him besides what is recorded here. Although there is not much about Isaac, yet the divine author has a purpose in reporting the events, which happened to Isaac. Once again God demonstrates that He is faithful to His promises to Abraham, and if necessary He will intervene so that any man does not thwart His plan and purpose. On the other hand, man who have been called by God to do good works so that God would be praised, sometimes begins to doubt God and do things his own way that will result in embarrassing or damaging situations.

The parallel episodes between Isaac's escape from famine and lying to Abimelech, and subsequent signing of a peace treaty, and those of Abraham should not be viewed as one and the same event as purported by some. The similarities

do not necessarily attest to this view, and there are differences which attest to the contrary that they were two separate instances. Famine is a perennial weather occurrence. It is baseless to place so much emphasis on this similarity. The name of Abimelech which appeared in both instances was not the personal name of the king but rather a title, like the name of Pharaoh. Moreover, almost 100 years spanned the two events, and Abimelech, if it was the personal name of the king could not have lived that long. The differences are not few. Isaac went to Gerar, not Egypt. Abimelech did not take Rebekah to be his concubine, whereas in the case of Sarah, she was taken. Isaac's deception was observed and discovered by Abimelech himself without divine intervention; there is no valid reason to postulate that the two episodes are one and the same.

This separate incident in the life of Isaac contains some precious lessons.

OUTLINE

- A. THE LORD CONFIRMS HIS COVENANT PROMISES TO ISAAC (26:1-5).**
1. Famine broke out in Canaan (26:1).
 2. The LORD commanded Isaac not to go to Egypt (26:2).
 3. The LORD repeated to Isaac His covenant promises which He made to Abraham (26:3-5).
- B. HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF (26:6-11).**

1. Isaac obeyed and stayed in Gerar (26:6).
2. Isaac lied to Abimelech about Rebekah (26:7-11).

C. THE LORD IS WITH ISAAC (26:12-33).

1. The Lord blesses Isaac (26:12-15).
 - a. Isaac had a good harvest (12).
 - b. Isaac became great and strong (13).
 - c. Isaac increased in his livestock and his servants (14)
 - d. Isaac was envied by the Philistines who did not treat him well (15).
2. Abimelech sent Isaac away (26:16-23)
 - a. Isaac was told to leave Gerar by Abimelech (16).
 - b. Isaac strove with the Philistines over the wells (17-22).
 - c. Isaac settled in Beersheba (23).
3. The Lord reassured Isaac (26:24-25).
 - a. The Lord reassured His presence with Isaac (24).
 - b. Isaac worshipped the LORD (25).

D. ISAAC'S ENEMY MAKE PEACE (26:26-33)

1. Abimelech made a surprise visit to Isaac (26-27).
2. Abimelech recognized that God was with Isaac and desired a peace treaty (28-29).
3. Isaac responded amicably and positively (30-31)

4. Isaac received another blessing from the LORD (32).

God's Promises Are Sure

A famine broke out in Canaan. Isaac must have decided to go to Egypt, and moving in that direction; otherwise the LORD would not have instructed him on the contrary. God appeared and directly spoke to him not to go Egypt. The LORD reiterated His covenant blessings and promises which He made with Abraham to him. God gave him His assurance that He would be with him, He would bless him, He would give the land in which he lived to his 'seed,' He would multiply his descendants, and all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his seed. And the LORD held Abraham, his father, before him as one who had implicitly and wholeheartedly obeyed him. Isaac could not have a better and greater assurance from the LORD. So Isaac remained in Gerar.

God will intervene when His plan and purpose is in danger of being thwarted. This time he prevented Isaac from going to Egypt. In the process He renewed His covenant blessings upon Isaac as He had promised Abraham. This reveals to us that God keeps His promises to the very end. God can be absolutely believed, trusted and obeyed!

A sad note follows. In spite of the assurance of blessings from God, Isaac feared for his life and lied about Rebekah because she was beautiful. Doubts of God's protection and the fear of man can cause us to sin by lying. It happened to Isaac. He doubted God and did not fully trust Him. This was coupled

with the fear of man for his life, and so he resorted to the wrong way which his father did despite God's assurance of His blessings and presence. Another New Testament example is Peter. He had just been commended by the LORD Jesus Christ for his testimony of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, when the very next moment he took LORD Jesus Christ to task for foretelling His passion and death (Matthew 16:13-23). The LORD had to rebuke him!

It was an embarrassing situation in which Isaac had put himself. His deception was discovered by Abimelech when he observed that Isaac's 'sporting with Rebekah' was in a manner more befitting a man and his wife. So Abimelech confronted Isaac who had to admit his guilt. By his deception, Isaac had thought unkindly about Abimelech and his people who had a high standard of morality. It was death penalty for anyone who was guilty of adultery! He had sinned in thought and deed. And Abimelech, a pagan king had to rebuke Isaac, a man chosen of God for special blessings. He was supposed to do good works so that others would praise and glorify God. Instead he made a laughing stock of his faith. God was patient with him and graciously dealt with him for his faith needed strengthening.

This is something we ought not to emulate. Although God is kind and forgiving and gracious, it should not be a reason to sin, neither should we tempt God. To sin and deceive others by lying will not only endanger God's blessings upon us but also bring more trouble and pain

to others and ourselves. Are you cheating on your spouse? Are you taking drugs? Are you mixing with the wrong people who disobey and rebel against God? Are you playing truant? And in all these when you are confronted you resort to lying. The lesson to be learned here is: 'A mature faith in God's promises engenders a fearless walk with Him, but cowering in fear endangers the blessing and makes a mockery of faith' (Ross, 460).

God's Immeasurable Grace

Isaac's faith needed strengthening. In keeping to His promises, God blessed Isaac before Abimelech. Isaac was a farmer and that year he had a very good harvest because God blessed him. He had livestock and many servants. God prospered him materially and the text says that he kept on getting richer and richer (v.13). The enlargement of his wealth and people needed more water. He reopened the wells, which his father had dug. Water was an essential and valuable commodity there. It was the life-giving element to people, animals, and plants.

Often blessings come with a repercussion. Others become jealous and envious. The Philistines were envious. They stopped up the wells, which were reopened by Isaac. Isaac prospered so much and became so powerful that Abimelech had to drive him away (16). This is true of all God's people. Wherever God's people are God blesses them. Even today in some countries the enemies of Christianity become jealous of the blessings Christians enjoyed. At the slightest excuse, these enemies of God would attack,

persecuted, and loot their property and belongings. Christians are blamed for all the ills of the country. But God is great.

Isaac showed great restraint. He followed the path of peace—living in peace with others. His faith was increasing. When he was told to leave, he moved away from Gerar towards the east, nearer to Canaan. His men dug wells and there was water. Again the enemies came and strove with his men for the well. Isaac gave way. He called the well ‘Esek’ meaning ‘Contention.’ Then he moved further east, and dug another well and there was again a struggle for the well again. Once again he gave in. He called the well ‘Sitnah,” which means ‘hostility.’ He moved further east and found another well and this time the striving stopped. He called the well, ‘Rehoboth,’ meaning ‘Room.’ In doing so, Isaac acknowledged God’s providence and indicated his faith and trust in God. And from there he moved into Beersheba, where once his father dwelt. He should have moved there in the first place and freed himself of the trouble. Now God appeared to him a second time and rehearsed the covenant with him reassuring him again of His presence and blessings.

Isaac was a man of peace. He was unassuming. Nothing neither spectacular nor great like his father, Abraham, who was a towering giant in faith and deeds. But we learn from Isaac how to live peaceably with others. His faith had grown. It is seen each time when he was pushed out and the wells he dug were taken by his enemies, he

submitted. But he was blessed with new wells as God had promised. He saw the graciousness and faithfulness of God. In the process of strengthening his faith, God used those incidents to bring him back to where he should be, in Beersheba where Abraham had settled, in the Promised Land.

The lesson: are we in a place where God does not want us to be? Throughout the week, do we desire to be in God’s house and with God’s people? Are things happening in our life which are God’s wake up calls, God’ road signs pointing to where we should be heading and be where He wants you to be? Events happen in our lives not by chance. They can be God’s way to tell us that we ought to move on and be where He wants us to be. Be discerning and know the will of God.

God’s Way the Best Way

When a man’s way pleases the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Proverbs 16:7). This is illustrated in the life of Isaac. Isaac had learned to trust God after being rebuked by Abimelech. Each time he was attacked, he gave way, and God blessed him. His enemy, Abimelech could not take it anymore. Isaac became stronger and more powerful despite his attempts to weaken him. Abimelech came to make a peace treaty with Isaac. Once again, Isaac graciously received them, in spite of the fact that Isaac knew all along that Abimelech and his men hated him and drove him away. He obliged by agreeing to the peace treaty. He then treated them to a feast—a customary ratification of the treaty. And God attended to the occasion

by servant's news that a well which they were digging, water was found! And Isaac called the well 'Shebah' meaning 'oath,' as a reminder of the peace treaty.

How do we treat our enemies? How do we relate to those who wish us harm? Our nature of our flesh is to retaliate. We want to show how strong we are. We desire to impress others that we cannot be bullied. But what did our Lord Jesus Christ teach us: *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you* (Matthew 5:44).

The precious lesson: God is faithful and just. Believe and obey Him without fear of man.

END

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CHAPTER 26

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Genesis 26:1-5; 1Peter 1:3-9; James 1:2-4.

TUESDAY: Genesis 26:6-11; Proverbs 29:25; Psalm 56:3-9; Matthew 5:16.

WEDNESDAY: Genesis 26:12-16; Psalms 103:1-5; Matthew 6:33; Psalm 84:11.

THURSDAY: Genesis 26:17-25; Romans 12:17-21; Matthew 5:43-48.

FRIDAY: Genesis 26:26-33; Proverbs 16:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18.

Discussion Questions

1. When famine threatened Isaac, what did God say to him?

2. What was the basis of God's promises to Isaac?

3. When adverse circumstances threatened you, what should your response be? What is the basis for your response?

4. Why the prohibition to go to Egypt?

5. What weakness of his father did Isaac pick up? How did he know about his father's weakness?

6. What a shameful experience that Isaac had. What was it?

7. Is it possible to fall into sin immediately after receiving a blessing? Can you illustrate one person in the New Testament?

8. What were the blessings of Isaac? How did he get them?

9. Has God similarly blessed you? What are the blessings?

10. Why were they fighting so much for the wells?

11. Do you approve of Isaac's action towards the Philistines who 'stopped' the wells he dug? Explain.

12. How were Isaac's unjust troubles from the Philistines solved? How did he response to the solution?

13. What did Isaac think of Abimelech and how did Isaac treat him?

14. Do you think that Isaac did the right thing even though he knew that the LORD had blessed him and would continue to do so?

15. What was the good news which Isaac's servant brought to him? What does that tell us about the LORD?
