

Understanding God in the Old Testament

God Still Pulls Through

Genesis 26

Turn with me this morning to the book of Genesis 26, I want to continue to look at “Understanding God in the Old Testament.” When we last left off we looked at the life of Abraham. Here we find the beginning of the lineage of promise not only to him but also to us today. God’s promise to bless his descendents has become today a spiritual promise of blessing to those who will come to a saving understanding and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - A blessing that results in our eternal reunion with God. **Galatians 3:16** tells us:

God gave the promise to Abraham and his child. And notice that it doesn’t say the promise was to children, as if it meant many descendents. But the promise was to his child – and that, of course, means Christ.

It was God’s promises to Abraham, reiterated time and time again that cause him to be a man of faith. It was God’s proof and protection that showed Abraham that He could be trusted, and it was God’s provision and sovereign leading that allowed Abraham to experience the incredible mercy and grace of God. Although Abraham was a man of faith mentioned in the great chapter of faith in Hebrews 11, he had his moments just as you and I do. I think it is very clear that **our confidence needs to be more in God than in ourselves.**

Just as we saw in the story of the tower of Babel, mankind has a way of trying to solve things on their own. Isaiah tells us in **Isaiah 5:21**:

21 What sorrow for those who are wise in their own eyes and think themselves so clever.

We have to make room for God without any need to try and figure everything out, without any predetermined plan, and without any limit of access in our lives to God. One of the things we learn from Abraham is how God’s leading, God’s will, and God’s plan was more than enough – a lesson we also need to become comfortable with.

This morning, I want to look at the life of Isaac, and I have specifically titled my message this morning “God still pulls through.” We first read of Isaac in Genesis 21:3-7 and we read that Sarah issues the name Isaac which, like many biblical names, has a meaning behind it. The name Isaac means “He laughs”. When Isaac was born it was the fulfillment of a promise that God made to Abraham and it gave God great joy to pull through.

Ever since Isaac’s childhood, he was able to experience first hand the provision of God. The first event we read is Abraham trying to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, I am sure quite a

traumatic event for him, maybe even feeling betrayed by his father and God, until Abraham is stopped right before his knife came down upon the boy. Look at **Genesis 22:6-12**:

6 So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, 7 Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" 8 "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together. 9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. 11 At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!" 12 "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

Isaac asks, "where's the sheep?" and Abraham assures him that God will provide. Then when he realizes that he is the sheep, you don't read of any struggle, just the fact the Abraham tied his son and laid him on the altar.

Traumatic event? I believe so. Image the fear, the questioning, the distrust, the stress, this event may have caused. I guarantee that if you or I were Isaac, this event would have left both a negative and positive impression. This leads me to my first point this morning which is **1. Even in the face of trauma and pain, God still pulls through.**

Even when it seems like what we are going through could very well take us out, even when it seems so overwhelming and inescapable, even when it may leave scars of hurt and pain, God still pulls through and gives us what we need.

Even when Isaac's mother Sarah dies, Abraham sends out a servant to find a wife for Isaac. And God divinely leads the servant to a woman by the name of Rebekah. And we read in **Genesis 24:67**:

67 And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

God's promise and his oath doesn't change. **Hebrews 6:13-19** tells us:

Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying: 14 "I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number." 15 Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised. 16 Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding.*

17 God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. 18 So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. 19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.

So no matter what we may be going through today, God's provision has been made and all we need to do is remain patient, as Abraham, and trust God every step of the way. He will provide – Jehovah Jireh.

When we look at the life of Isaac, however, we find that there are many similarities between his life and his fathers. Some scholars have even come to believe that maybe a mistake was made in the account, that there were too many similarities. But names and wording prove the contrary. Isaac's life is a replay of Abraham's life. Remember, it was a famine that led Abraham to Egypt. We read in Genesis 26:1 that a famine hit the area where Isaac had settled. Isaac is led to a place Gerar and just like his father commits the same sin. Look at **Genesis 26:7-11**:

7 When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "They will kill me to get her, because she is so beautiful." 8 But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah. 9 Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" "Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied. 10 "How could you do this to us?" Abimelech exclaimed. "One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin." 11 Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: "Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!"

2. Even in the face of our sin, God still pulls through. God could have very well punished Isaac, but instead, he continues to bless him. You and I are completely sinful people. Yet God's forgiveness has been promised and delivered.

I want us to understand something else here - that kids learn from us adults. They watch what you do, what you say, and they become examples of your example. Although Isaac wasn't born yet when Abraham deceived Abimelech, I am sure he heard stories of his father's failure. And because his father got away with it, thought he could do the same no matter how right or wrong it was. Our children learn to handle life's circumstance through how we handle our own.

However, just as God still pulled through on his promise despite Abraham's sin and disobedience, and just as God remained faithful to his promise to Isaac despite his sin, **God is faithful to us despite our mistakes and will be faithful to our children despite**

their mistakes and sin as well. God's faithfulness and patience and forgiveness is also offered to them. Just as much as God has worked in our lives, I guarantee that he will be chasing them around trying to do the same.

Many times people view God in the Old Testament as one who presses the destruct button whenever a sin was committed, yet it is clear to us that God has always been patient, forgiving, and providing.

We then read further in chapter 26 of how Isaac was moved around, having his land and his wells taken from him time and time again. Back in those days the digging of a well was considered a claim of ownership of the land on which it was located. God's blessing on Isaac was so overwhelming that it scared the Philistines and Abimelech. We learn see our third point here: **3. Even in the face of opposition and trials, God still pulls through.** Look at **Genesis 26:16**:

16 Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too powerful for us."

Basically, Isaac's blessing became a threat to those around him. There then becomes a dispute over another well he has dug and Isaac chooses to relinquish that one as well until finally, he digs a third and names the well, "Room enough" because God had made room for him, given him a place to thrive.

Through opposition and trials we find that God still pulls through for Isaac. In fact, it is through the opposition and trials that God is able to lead Isaac to a place called Beersheba. What is so significant about this place? It is the first place Abraham and his son went to after they came down from Mount Moriah. To Isaac it was a place of rest after God's provision. We also know it was a place where Abraham worshiped God. It was at this place that God reaffirms his promise to Isaac.

It is as if Isaac's life had made a full circle, that despite his trauma and pain, despite his sin, and despite his trials and opposition, all this led to a faithful God who was to be worshipped. Notice in **Genesis 26:25** the order in which Isaac settles at Beersheba:

25 Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the Lord. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

First, the altar (worship), then his tents, and then his well (Isaac had come to trust God). No matter what we may be going through, may you come to understand that it all leads to our faithful God, and our worship of him. If we keep him our focal point, our confidence in him, everything will work it's way out according to his plan. **Matthew 6:33** tells us:

33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

4. If we can stand strong in God through trauma and pain, through making mistakes and sin, and through facing opposition and trials, then our confidence will produce evidence that will lead others to God. Look at what happens in **Genesis 26:26-29**:

26 One day King Abimelech came from Gerar with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander. 27 “Why have you come here?” Isaac asked. “You obviously hate me, since you kicked me off your land.” 28 They replied, “We can plainly see that the Lord is with you. So we want to enter into a sworn treaty with you. Let’s make a covenant. 29 Swear that you will not harm us, just as we have never troubled you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away from us in peace. And now look how the Lord has blessed you!”

(Now hear me out, I am not saying that witnessing to people is wrong) But I believe **the greatest form of evangelism is our obedience and faith in God lived out in a public display of God’s ability, not my own.** Remember, I said at the beginning of our study today that our confidence needs to be more on God than on ourselves.

We see in the life of Isaac, that through God’s promise and faithfulness, we will be drawn to a place of dependence and worship of our God. Life will hand us a series of events, yet it will always lead us closer to God if we stand strong and trust him. No matter what you go through in life God still pulls through despite our hurts, hurdles and hang ups. He will always be Jehovah Jireh, the one who provides. Let’s pray!