

The Story of Jacob
Heroes of Faith Series
Week 3: Problems, Problems, Problems

Scripture

Genesis 26:12-33

Motivation

Where are we in the story of Jacob?

- Jacob and Esau (twins) were different people (Esau – hunter and outdoorsman; Isaac - shepherd and preferred the comforts of home)
- Their parents had a divided love for them (Isaac loved Esau more; Rebekah loved Jacob more)
- Jacob manipulated his older brother (took advantage of him at a weak time and made him sell his birthright in exchange for stew)
- Isaac repeats some of the same sins of his father, Abraham (tempted to leave the promised land; Isaac lied to Abimelech about Rebekah being his wife)

Genesis 26 shifted the narrative from Jacob and Esau to their father, Isaac, and before we move further in Jacob and Esau's story, Isaac is still the focus.

Information

Three snapshots of God's actions toward Isaac...

- **God's actions toward Isaac are based in His purpose, not Isaac's performance**
Genesis 26:12 (ESV) And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him, 13 and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy.

Why did Isaac prosper in the land? Was it because of his "outstanding behavior"?

- ✓ His *moral* behavior doesn't seem very outstanding
- ✓ Although his *physical* work ethic seems very strong
- ✓ God's blessing was fully based on His covenant with Abraham and Isaac, regardless of their conduct

Genesis 26:3 (ESV) "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father."

■ **God's blessings on Isaac also bring about burdens**

Genesis 26:14 (ESV) He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. **16** And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we." **17** So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there.

- ✓ The blessings of God caused the Philistines to envy his prosperity
- ✓ The blessings of God caused Abimelech to uproot Isaac from his land/home
- ✓ The blessings of God didn't eliminate problems

○ **Digging the first well (called *Esek*, meaning contention or dispute)**

Genesis 26:18 (ESV) And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them. **19** But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, **20** the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.

"Since water was a vital commodity in this arid region, disputes over the ownership of wells were common." – ESV Study Bible

○ **Digging the second well (called *Sitnah*, meaning opposition)**

Genesis 26:21 (ESV) Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah.

○ **Digging the third well (called *Rehoboth*, meaning room)**

Genesis 26:22 (ESV) And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

- ✓ The blessings of God evoke a response of worship from Isaac

Genesis 26:23 (ESV) From there he went up to Beersheba. **24** And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake." **25** So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

■ **God's blessings toward Isaac are even recognized by unbelievers**

- ✓ The Philistine leaders acknowledge the Lord's blessing on Isaac

Genesis 26:26 (ESV) When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army, **27** Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" **28** They said, "We see plainly that the Lord has been with you."

- ✓ They ask Isaac to make a covenant with them for peace and protection

Genesis 26:28 (ESV) They said, “We see plainly that the Lord has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, **29** that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the Lord.”

- ✓ Isaac made a peace covenant with them

Genesis 26:30 (ESV) So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. **31** In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.

A fourth well was dug (called *Shibah*, meaning oath)

Genesis 26:32 (ESV) That same day Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, “We have found water.” **33** He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

Application

God’s actions and blessings on Isaac (apart from any effort of his own) remind me of God’s actions toward us through Jesus Christ, who saved us through His work and not ours.

Titus 3:4 (ESV) But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...

Romans 5:8 (ESV) ...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

“Mercy and grace are evident in the salvation that is available through Jesus Christ. We deserved judgment, but in Christ we receive mercy from God and are delivered from judgment. In Christ we receive eternal salvation, forgiveness of sins, and abundant life—all gifts of grace. Our response to the mercy and grace of God should be to fall on our knees in worship and thanksgiving.” – Got Questions