

Staying Focused on God's Grace

Genesis 26:1-35

"Most of the time when the Bible speaks about God's presence, it refers to his presence to bless. The truth for believers is: all of God is always with us in every place and at all times to protect us and bless us. And when taken to heart this truth is elevating and life-altering..."

I have said all this because the life of Isaac, as it is presented in the brief compass of Genesis 26, had to do with his learning that God was present with him. We see this in three parallel declarations of God's presence at the beginning, middle, and end of the account. The first was future: 'Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you' (v.3). The second was present: 'Fear not, for I am with you' (v.24). And the third was past, as the pagan king Abimelech observed, 'We plainly see that the Lord has been with you' (v. 28). How Isaac related to and appropriated the reality of God's presence had everything to do with how he lived. And so it is with us." Kent Hughes

- I. Isaac's troubles began when he took his focus off God and fixed his gaze upon his circumstances. Circumstances determine in many ways the choices we make, especially if they prove to be stressful and harmful to our overall physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. The challenge is in knowing how to deal with them God's way instead of our way. Isaac, out of fear, immediately moved to alleviate the stress he was under by doing what he thought best. Unfortunately, he didn't look to God for wisdom in the matter. He didn't pray and ask God for guidance, and he certainly didn't take into consideration his spiritual heritage. Fortunately for Isaac, God's grace intervened to keep him focused on the importance of staying faithful to His faithfulness in keeping the oath He swore to his father Abraham.

Gal. 26:1-7

Prov. 16:9

Prov. 3:5-6

Heb. 12:2-3

Heb. 12:1-2

Ps. 139:7-12

Ps. 16:8 *I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

II. The challenges to our trust in God seem never-ending. Almost every day, a new problem or stressor tests our dependence on the Lord to give us what we need to deal with whatever it might be. Isaac just experienced God talking to him directly with the command to be faithful like his father Abraham was in trusting Him. Yet, when faced with a new challenge, he chose once again to trust in his wisdom to solve his supposed problem instead of looking to God for help. Fortunately for Isaac, God's grace intervened once again to keep him safe in His will. We are no better in many ways. Perhaps God gives us Isaac's example of a fickle faith to remind us that His grace is sufficient to give us whatever we need to navigate through life's tumultuous ways. In this life, we are either bowing to fear by putting our trust in ourselves or bowing before God by putting our trust in Him. The choices we make when under the stress of negative circumstance reveal in many ways our understanding of the God we serve.

Gen. 26:8-11
2 Cor. 7:10

2 Cor. 12:9 *9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

III. God's grace lovingly works in our hearts to bring us into a trusting relationship with Him. It takes time, trials, failures, suffering, repentance, and spiritual renewal to mature us to be true to Him and the promises he has given us in Christ Jesus (James 1:2-4). In time, as we mature in Christ, we'll find that fickleness toward trusting in the Lord fades away and is replaced with an enduring perseverance to stay true to Him. Isaac learned to trust God. When faced with opposition over the wealth and success God gave him, he didn't bow to fear or try to solve his own problems. Instead, he chose to trust God to work all things to his good. Why should that be any different for us. We know Him. He's working in our lives. He's maturing us and giving us the ability to trust Him in the most vexing of circumstances. And He, like with Isaac, is moving us to rest in His grace as the trials we face move us more and more to Journey where He wants us instead of where the world want us.

Gen. 26:12-33
Duet. 31:6
Heb. 13:5-6
John 4:13

Beer Lahoi Roi = "The well of the one who sees me and lives"

Esek = "contention" (the well of contention)

Sitnah = "strife" (the well of strife)

Rehobath = "wide places or roominess" (the well of roominess)

Shebah = "an oath" (the well of oath or the well of seven)

Using this as a spiritual illustration, we might say that the wells of peace, of power, of grace, of wisdom, of transformation are all available for the believer today as they were for previous generations. The question is whether a present generation will have the faith, the work, and the commitment to dig the wells again. Guzik