



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and famine!

Genesis 26:1-35

Message #28 of 50 – S930

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Sunday Morning Service

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Faith and famine!

Genesis 26:1-35

Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 26**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- In today's text we will see Isaac's response to a famine

Famine: an extreme scarcity of food.

- Famines are caused by a wide range of things
- Drought – not enough rain – can also be caused by too much rain
- Can be caused by pestilence – swarms of locusts or disease
- Can also be caused by war
- Whatever the cause – starvation is the human result
- An extreme scarcity of food may not be the only kind of famine
- As the prophet Amos was inspired to rebuke the nation of Israel, he identified another kind of famine **Amos 8:11**

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

- The Lord was saying to the nation of Israel that if they were unwilling to listen to His voice, meaning obey Him, then He would make so that they couldn't hear His voice at all
- That was a judgment for their rebellion
- God dealt with the Jews on a national level – He deals with Christians on a personal level
- A rebellious Christian should not expect to hear from God until they repent and return to Him in faith and obedience
- I believe we find ourselves today in a kind of famine – an extreme scarcity of righteousness
- And as it is usually the case – the problem starts at the top **Proverbs 16:12**

It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established by righteousness.

- When the leaders of any organization turn their backs on God and follow their own way = unrighteousness – wickedness – sin
- That is the world we were born into – a famine of righteousness

- As we examine Isaac's response to a famine of food, we will see how we ought to respond
- Let's pray for our nation and then get into our text
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith and famine!**
- Today, we move past the halfway point of our study through Genesis
- So far, I think this has been a good journey – let's continue
- **Genesis 26:1**
- Based on the emphasis on wells later in the chapter we can guess that this famine is a result of a drought
- Back in Genesis 12, Isaac's father Abraham also had to deal with a famine
- Abraham's response was to leave the land God promised him and go to Egypt – epic failure
- Gerar is on the way to Egypt
- It appears that Isaac did not learn the lesson of his father
- **Genesis 26:2-6**
- The Lord prohibits Isaac from going to Egypt
- Tells him to stay in the land – in the land where the famine is
- And then, the Lord repeats the promise He had made to Abraham and applies it to Isaac
- Egypt is a picture of the world and its ways
- The spiritual message here is – don't run to the world when life gets tough
- To his credit, Isaac obeyed and stayed in the land
- Isaac trusted God to provide for him
- But then he proves that his faith is not perfected
- **Genesis 26:7-11**
- This should sound like a familiar story
- Abraham did the same thing – twice
- By staying in Gerar, Isaac proved that he trusted God to provide for him

- But by lying about Rebekah, Isaac proved that he didn't trust God to protect him
 - Listen, the actions of your life prove the reality of your faith
 - Isaac might have said he trusted God completely, but then he lied to protect himself
 - The lie nullifies the statement
 - **Genesis 26:12-14a**
 - The account takes a dramatic turn here
 - Rather than running for safety to Egypt, he is planting crops as an act of faith and obedience
 - And God responds by blessing him with an abundant crop – in the midst of a famine
 - Remember, in the midst of whatever famine you find yourself in, God can bless you regardless of the famine **Ephesians 3:20-21**
- Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**
- Yours could be in a famine in a relationship – God can bless you abundantly if you will trust and obey Him
 - You might be in a famine emotionally – not feeling fulfilled or connected – Trust and obey God
 - Whatever extreme scarcity you are experiencing – trust God to provide and protect
 - The people around Isaac noticed
 - **Genesis 26:14b-16**
 - Not everyone is going to be happy if God blesses you
 - They might envy you – they might try to sabotage you – they might try to get rid of you
 - **Genesis 26:17-19**
 - There is an important lesson implied in this
 - Before digging new wells Isaac went back to ones his father had dug
 - These wells had provided water in the past and could be trusted now
 - Water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and spiritual things
 - There is a tendency by some to seek new ways of experiencing spiritual things
 - Unfortunately, they will do so at the expense of the old wells

- The problem is that some of the things that are being promoted as new spiritual experiences are not from God – at best – man’s imagination – at worst – a demonic influence
- The old wells – the old ways of experiencing the spiritual – prayer to God and for God’s people – Bible reading and study – fellowship with God’s people – serving God and His people – giving to God’s work – Spirit-filled worship of God
- When we practice those things, something miraculous happens **John 7:37-38**

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

- My personal experience is that the new is rarely new, and usually not godly
- I also find when I am faithful to go to the old wells for my spiritual water – they satisfy, and I do not desire the new
- Being spiritually satisfied and blessed by God does not mean everything is going to go your way
- **Genesis 26:20-22**
- Notice, Isaac doesn’t fight with the herdsman of Gerar
- That is interesting, because he could have
- Remember in verse 16 – Abimelech asked him to leave the area because Isaac and his people were ‘mightier’ than Abimelech’s people
- The Bible teaches us that just because we are stronger than someone else, that doesn’t give us the right to insist upon our way
- Jesus taught the radical concept **Matthew 5:39-42**

But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

- Isaac was learning to trust God more and more
- Instead of fighting for what he wanted he found a way to be at peace with those around him
- Remember, there was a famine in the land – people needed water
- Which people? All people – the herdsmen of Gerar and Isaac’s people

- By leaving and digging more wells Isaac was providing not just for his people but for the unbelievers around him
 - **Genesis 26:23-25**
 - The Lord encourages Isaac by reminding him of the promise He made to him
 - Isaac's response was to build an altar and worship God
 - The Isaac gets a visit from Abimelech
 - **Genesis 26:26-31**
 - Abimelech can see God's hand of blessing upon Isaac
 - Wants a covenant of peace with him
 - This is self-defense on Abimelech's part
 - He doesn't want any problems with a guy whose God can bless him in the midst of a famine
 - Isaac agrees **Romans 12:18**
- If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**
- Not always possible, but we must try to do our part
 - **Genesis 26:32-33**
 - Almost as if to show His approval, God blesses Isaac with another well
 - Then a couple of verses that set us up for the next chapter
 - **Genesis 26:34-35**
 - Trusting God does not mean that your life is going to be free of conflict, frustration, or disappointment.
 - It is likely that Isaac wanted to have God providentially provide a wife for Esau.
 - By doing this Esau proved his selfish nature and proved why God chose Jacob instead.
 - This account took place in the setting of a famine – an extreme scarcity of food
 - We will all go through some kind of a famine – probably not of food
 - But some extreme scarcity in your life – emotionally, relationally, spiritually, physically
 - Three quick things when you find yourself there
 - First – **Stay where God puts you!**
 - Isaac's first, natural response was to go to Egypt – the world

- Do not go the world to satisfy your extreme scarcity
- Abraham tried that and it was a disaster
- Second – **Trust God to provide and protect!**
- Isaac tried to protect himself by lying about his relationship to Rebekah
- God is able! Trust Him! Always do what is right – even when you are afraid of the consequences.
- God is able to control the consequences
- Third – **Walk in faith and obedience!**
- Isaac stayed in the land, planted crops, and dug wells
- He was busy obeying God by faith – and God blessed him
- We are living in a time of a famine of righteousness
- What should we do?
- Stay where God puts you! Trust God to provide for you and protect you! Walk in faith and obedience doing what is right, right now!
- Who knows, God might choose to bless you so abundantly that the world seeks peace with you
- And then you can introduce them to the Prince of Peace
- **Pray!**