

In America we love stories of individual human effort... self effort.

pull yourself up by the bootstraps, push on through everything, and get the prize in the end.

We have seen thus far in Genesis the inability of self effort to gain the favor of God.

We have seen it first in the presentation of original sin... that the origin of sin is in Adam and Eve's effort to become Godlike.

And, as a result of this folly, human beings ever since have been infected by sin such that our every effort is misguided.

We see it in Genesis... in a murder, then in corruption of society, in an effort to build a great city, in Sodom and Gomorrah every effort of man is always corrupted and fails to glorify God.

Then we have seen it in the fact of God's choosing who He will love and bless.

He blesses Noah, He chooses Abraham, He chooses Isaac, He chooses Jacob...

And in each case the choosing comes before the blessing and it irrespective of anything that these people have done.

It is not their life path that determines God's choosing, but God's choosing that determines their life path.

Now we are going to see a third fact that flies in the face of self effort.

We have seen it already in Genesis 18-19.

In Genesis 18, Abraham talks to God on behalf of his cousin Lot. He bargains with God to spare Lot.

Then in Genesis 19:29, we learn that God rescued Lot because of Abraham.

Now, in Genesis 26, we see God blessing Isaac because of Abraham, because of how Abraham lived.

God is not blessing Isaac because of anything that Isaac has done, or because of Isaac in his own right.

God blesses Isaac because of Abraham's obedience.

Abraham has left a legacy of faith and Isaac finds himself standing in it. You, too, can live like Abraham.

**By walking in faith, you can leave a legacy of faith.**

Now, you might confuse this message with a message on parenting. It is not. It is not about parenting.

Actually, Abraham is not a father that you would want to emulate in how he parents Isaac or how he manages his family.

He may have been a good father, we just don't know about it.

What Abraham did do was trust God and obey God. Isaac saw him do it. More importantly, God saw him do it.

And, this legacy changed Isaac's life. Let us take a look at it.

## **I. The God of Abraham makes a promise to Isaac.**

**vss. 1-6**

There is a famine, comparable to the one we read of in Genesis 12 when Abraham went to Egypt.

And Isaac is on the move, probably down to the coast and then toward Egypt. Why? Because that is what his father did.

But, God stops him and makes him a promise.

This is the first time in the bible when God speaks to Isaac.

God spoke previously to Rebekah, his wife, but not to him. Now God speaks to Isaac, and he's around 75 years old.

He's about the same age as Abraham was when God first spoke to him.

Sometimes we have this idea in the Bible that everybody was hearing from God all the time. Not so...

They did not have the Bible then. No conferences. No church. No Christian radio. No regular preaching.

How would you feel if you had to wait until you were 75 to hear anything from God.

Isaac did have his father to talk to him, but don't think it was easier for him than for you.

So, now God repeats the promise He had made to Abraham, but this time He makes it to Isaac. (vss. 2-4)

But why? God tells him... and us. (vs. 5)

"obey" = listened, it is one word in the Old Testament. There is no listening without obedience.

Abraham "kept" four things... or, rather, the same thing with four different emphases:

1. "My charge" = An order, something from a commanding officer that is to be followed or disaster comes
2. "My commandments" = A command, something from a king that must be obeyed or you are in trouble
3. "My statutes" = A prescription, something to keep you well so that you don't suffer
4. "My laws" = An instruction, something that must be taught to others and you are accountable

Now, all of this is here very intentionally, it is not accident.

Because, this was first written by God through Moses for a people just rescued from Egypt and wandering in the wilderness.

These people of Israel, some 400 years after Isaac, had just received the Law (the word of God) from God.

They were supposed to listen to it... **Deut. 11:1**

You see? You cannot miss the obvious connection. The same four words!

But, there's a difference. Here, instead of "obey" = listen we have "love"

Jesus says, "If you love me you will keep My commandments"

So, there is an intimate connection between love and obedience.

And, if you continue reading in Deuteronomy, you will discover that if they would obey,

they could expect to leave a legacy for their children just like Abraham left for Isaac.

Now, we know that Abraham's obedience was not perfect. He was sinful. He was rebuked upon occasion.

Abraham was not always wise. At times, God did rescue him from problems of his own making.

But, through it all he trusted God. He believed. He grew in his faith and obedience.

If you live this way you will leave a legacy for others to walk in.

## II. The God of Abraham rescues Isaac through all kinds of troubles.

### A. Error vss. 7-11

This is an error that Isaac makes. He lies about his wife, just like Abraham did... like father, like son. So, parents, an important lesson here: Your children will pick up your sins, even if they don't see them. Isaac did not, though he may have heard about them.

Actually, the one person in this story who was familiar with this behavior was Abimelech, who is now an old wise man. He's the one who in Genesis 20, takes Sarah for a wife because Abraham lied about her. He gets in big trouble from God. So, now, it appears he has learned his lesson. He leaves Rebekah alone and watches.

OK, it's kind of creepy. Maybe Abimelech is not the sort of guy you want for a neighbor.

Bt, the whole thing is unnecessary, because Abimelech already has learned to respect Abraham's God. He's not going to mess with Isaac.

So, even though Isaac is in the wrong, God is protecting him.

Sometimes God protects us by using others who have gone before.

### B. Envy vss. 12-17

The next problem comes because God is blessing Isaac so abundantly.

The Philistines get jealous, envious, because Isaac has so much... and they stop up the wells and try to send him away. Sometimes life goes this way.

You have success and people try to mess with you just because they don't have as much success. Sad, but how people are. So, we see that Isaac sort of rolls with the punches. He leaves, but not far... down to a river bed.

### C. Opposition vss. 18-22

So, Isaac comes back and digs out the stopped wells.

When he does those jealous neighbors come back and claim that they are theirs.

It must have been irritating, maddening. It isn't fair. But often envy and opposition are not fair. Life isn't fair.

Notice that Isaac doesn't act as though his fortunes depend on that well, or the next...

He knows, believes that he is living in the hand of God. God will make a way.

Finally he finds a place where they quit bothering him... and he recognizes it as God's doing. And, it is.

God speaks to him again.

## III. The God of Abraham makes a promise to Isaac. vss. 23-25

Beersheba is about 20 miles to the east. Isaac probably goes back there because the famine has gone.

It is usually drier in Beersheba up in the hills than in Gerar along the coast.

Consider here how God identifies Himself. "God of your father Abraham" = not Isaac's God? Why?

It is because this God is known by His history with people,

and in this case the only person with whom He has a history is Abraham.

Consider next the command and then the promise that God makes to him.

Again I will point out that usually in the Bible God's commands come hand in hand with His promises.

People often get so upset that God gives commands. God gives us commands so that He can give us His promises of blessings.

The command: "do not fear." = Isaac apparently was afraid. Powerful people were giving him problems.

The promise: "I am with you... and will bless you... and... descendants" = God has his future planned.

Why should you not be afraid? What if people are envious? What if people want to mess up your life?

Well, God is doing something. No person on earth is able to mess up what He is doing. Not even Satan can do that.

"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Phi 1:6

Consider the reason that God is doing all of this for Isaac. It is Abraham. God is blessing Isaac because of Abraham.

And, so we have in the next verse, the very first time that Isaac in his own right worships God.

Isaac is learning. He is not perfect. He has been scared. But, he is learning that God has chosen him.

God has chosen him and is blessing him for the sake of his father, but his father's faith will not be enough.

Isaac now has to believe and worship and follow God for himself.

## IV. The God of Abraham is with Isaac. vss. 26-33

It is as they are digging the well, apparently, that the delegation of the Philistines shows up, and Isaac is wary.

But, apart from Isaac's knowledge, God has been working on them.

They have been doing some thinking... and they don't want to be on God's bad side.

They make a treaty and as soon as they are sent away, Isaac's well diggers strike water!

It is as if God is saying to Isaac, "See!? I am blessing you and I will keep blessing you. I am with you and will not let you down."

And, all this is because of Abraham. Abraham believed God and obeyed God and his life is now bearing fruit in the life of his son. When you obey God, you never know what legacy you will leave... how God will honor your obedience.

*I think of Jim Elliot who was killed at age 28 in the Amazon jungles trying to witness to a tribe of savages.*

*The legacy he left has changed the lives of his wife, daughter, the whole tribe that killed him...*

*and countless young men and women since who have devoted their lives to God because of his faith and obedience.*

Faith and obedience. Will your legacy be a blessing to others?