

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #63

Genesis 26:17-33

It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter how faithful you are, you may be certain that there will be enemies and there will be hostilities in your world. Satan will see to it. However, God uses hostile situations, hassles and troubles to direct His own to His place of choosing.

FAMINE TIMES OF OPPOSITION AND HOSTILITY WILL COME TO EVEN THE MOST FAITHFUL BELIEVERS, BUT ONE WHO STAYS FAITHFUL MAY BE CERTAIN THAT GOD WILL CONTINUE TO BLESS, PROTECT AND EVENTUALLY ELIMINATE THE ENEMY AND LEAD THE BELIEVER ACCORDING TO HIS SOVEREIGN PLAN.

Our enemies may be able to stop immediate tranquility, but they cannot ever stop eternal sovereignty. God's sovereign plan is being worked out in your life even in times of adversity.

NARRATIVE REALITY #1 - The faithful believer finds himself confronted with hostile conflicts. Genesis 26:17-22.

Isaac was envied because he was prospering in famine times (Genesis 26:12-14). People were so jealous of him that they asked him to leave (26:16). So Isaac moved from Gerar (26:6) to the valley of Gerar (26:17), specifically Beersheba (v.23) about 20 miles to the southeast.

Isaac specifically moved to the areas where his dad Abraham had dug wells and he had to redig them, because they had been filled in. When Isaac's servants got the wells dug, some Philistine herdsmen "quarreled" with Isaac's herdsmen. That Hebrew word "quarrel" (vv. 20, 21, 22) is a forensic, legal type contention (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 767). In other words these Philistines were making some legal claim to this well which had been originally dug by Abraham (26:15). Isaac is the one with a legal right to these wells.

According to ancient eastern culture, all lands not occupied are called "God's Lands" and whoever discovers water and brings irrigation to the land became the legal owner of the property. In fact, for another person or group to fill up a well someone else dug was such an act of ecological terrorism that it was considered to be an act of war (Marcus Dods, *Genesis*, p. 112).

The response of Isaac is interesting (26:20) for he could have legally fought, but instead he named the well "Esek", which means to strive or contend and then he moved on to another spot (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 659). He must have wondered, why aren't things working? He wasn't home yet.

According to verse 21, the same thing happened again so Isaac named that well "Sitnah" which is a Hebrew word that is closely related to "Satan," which literally means contention or adversity by accusation (Ibid., p.788). Again, verse 22 tells us, he moved.

He went to another spot and dug another well and this time no contention came so he named this well "Rehoboth" which means a wide or open place (Ibid., p.764).

Notice carefully the end of verse 22, at last Isaac knew he was where he was supposed to be. This was the place the LORD wanted him to live.

- 1) Faithfulness does not mean you will be exempt from adverse circumstances and situations.
- 2) Those faithful to God will continue to follow him and not take the easy way out.
- 3) Sometimes the best thing to do is quietly back away from the enemy, even when you are right.
- 4) God will protect and direct you to where He wants you to be through difficulties.
- 5) Before you find God's perfect will you may need to make some moves or adjustments in life.

NARRATIVE REALITY #2 – The faithful believer worships God after facing hostile conflicts. Genesis 26:23-25

Isaac always kept this focus on God. He went to Beersheba which was a very special place to Abraham. This is where he had negotiated a peace treaty with the Philistines; where he lived (22:19) and where he worshipped God (21:22-34). This was the place where God appeared to Hagar; (21:14, 17) and this was the place Isaac knew he could worship God and this was a place he could expect God would speak to him. That very night, God appeared to Isaac and informed him that He was the God of his father Abraham and he had nothing to fear.

There are four reasons one faithful to God-need not be afraid, no matter What the circumstances:

(Reason #1) – The Divine Presence reason. 26:24b

(Reason #2) – The Divine Prosperity reason. 26:24c

(Reason #3) – The Divine Posterity reason. 26:24d

(Reason #4) – The Divine Promise reason. 26:24e

NARRATIVE REALITY #3 - The enemies acknowledge the faithful believer. Gen. 26:26-31

When a believer's ways please the LORD, even enemies will be conquered (Proverbs 16:7). Deep within the heart of any enemy is the realization that God's presence and power is in the life of his faithful people. Abimelech was a smart man and he wanted to negotiate a peace treaty with Isaac. W. H. Griffith Thomas said: "When God is honored by man, man is always honored by God" (*Genesis*, p. 242).

NARRATIVE REALITY #4 - The faithful believers receive more blessing of God. Genesis 26:32-33

More water was immediately found as a blessing of God. So in the midst of a dry, famine time, God is blessing and refreshing Isaac everywhere he goes.

Isaac named the well "Shibah" which means "covenant" or "oath." In fact, at the time Moses wrote, the place was called "Beersheba" which means "well of the covenant."

If any one purposes to stay faithful to God, he will experience God's blessings even when everyone else is experiencing a famine. God will direct, protect and bless one faithful to Him.