

## Isaac Marries Rebekah: Part 2 – Genesis 24

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*Genesis*

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Announcer. Welcome to Doctrine for Life with Dr. Joel Beeke. In today's broadcast, we will hear the second part of Dr. Beeke's message on Genesis 24, the finding of a wife for Isaac. In the first part, Dr. Beeke spoke of Abraham's concern to fulfill his covenant responsibility to find a good wife for his son who is the promised seed of the covenant. We also heard of the prayer of Abraham's servant that the Lord would guide him to the right woman. Today, we will hear of how the servant's meeting with Rebekah reveals God's control of all things, and we will also hear of the couple's commitment to each other. As you listen, may the Spirit give you ears to hear and a heart to believe the words of eternal life.

Dr. Joel Beeke. Now the servant, he can't hold back. You see, he breaks out into doxological praise. Rebekah is standing there. He says, "Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." And meanwhile Rebekah, hearing this man speak, hearing the name of her uncle, Abraham, and the God of Abraham, names she heard around her family table so many times, she gets overwhelmingly excited and she runs ahead and she runs to her mother's house to tell them. And Laban, a man who would later deceive Jacob so many times, hearing Rebekah's story and seeing the gold and the bracelets, runs out to the well. He, too, runs. Rebekah runs back and he runs back and he says, "Come in, thou blessed of the LORD." You won't hear that language, you see, among the Canaanites. "Thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels." And Laban gives him a good meal but the servant is in such a hurry and he's so excited and he says, "I won't take a bite of the meal," which is actually a rude thing to do. He says, "I have an errand. I must tell you my story immediately." They said, "Well, speak on." Then in 34 to 49, for 16 verses he repeats this whole fascinating history, adding and subtracting minor points to maximize the effect on Laban and his father, Bethuel. His purpose, of course, being to convince them of God's providential guidance so that they're going to consent to send Rebekah to Isaac. Then he concludes, notice in verse 49, look at verse 49. He concludes in a typical roundabout Oriental way, asking indirectly if he may take Rebekah as a bride, "now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

Laban and Bethuel are sitting there and they are overwhelmed at the story. This is amazing. This is clearly God's hand. They respond in verse 50, "The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good." In other words, "Who are we to resist the will of the Lord? We recognize God's hand in this." The servant has been eminently successful in his storytelling. They say to him in verse 51, "Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken." The servant hears these words, "Take her and let her go." They're going to let Rebekah go? Go to a strange land? Their dear, beautiful Rebekah? Again an answer to prayer and again he bows down in adoration to God, thanking him for hearing his cry.

Then he gets up and he reaches into his sacks again and he gives them rich gifts of gold, silver, beautiful garments, to Rebekah, to her mother, even to the brother, Laban. It was customary to hand out some gifts at such an occasion but not this extravagance, you see. The servant wants to confirm for the family to reassure them with all these gifts that Rebekah is going to be well taken care of.

Now with the bride secured, the servant finally eats and we read that he stayed up all night talking with the family, verse 54. And then in the morning, he wants to take Rebekah with him, but predictably despite the servant's great generosity, Laban and his mother hesitated, demurred a little bit. They're not quite ready to give up Rebekah so soon. "Let her abide here a few days, 10 at least." In the original Hebrew it actually says, "days or 10." Ten being a symbolic number that was rather indefinite. It could be perhaps months, perhaps a couple of years. Remember, Jacob later on would unexpectedly remain 20 years in Laban's service in part due to Laban's conniving ways.

But the servant doesn't budge a moment. He says, "No, no, no. Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away." You see, everything must be in a hurry. "Send me away that I may go to my master. Isaac is waiting. Abraham is waiting. It's a long journey back home. We need to get started now."

Well, they say, "We'll call Rebekah and see what she wants to do." It's just so beautiful here, isn't it? God honors this servant's determination because the family attempts to stonewall him. Occasions, yet another joyous providence, the public declaration of Rebekah's faith in front of her own family. "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said," in Hebrew it's one word, four letters, so simple, so beautiful, "I will go. I will forsake everything. I will forsake family and friends and possessions. I will go. I will leave everything behind. I trust in the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. I feel called to be Isaac's wife." She casts herself and her unknown future into the hands of God.

Well, what could Laban and Bethuel say at that point? So on the way they go. Verse 59 says, "they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse," we later learn she's Deborah, "and Abraham's servant, and his men." And they wish her the blessing, the blessing of verse 60, "Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them." Well, Laban and Bethuel could scarcely realize how richly this promise, this blessing would be fulfilled. Rebekah would become the mother of Israel. She would become one of the mothers of the Messiah. Her seed

would truly possess the gate of those who hate them. Not only would Israel overcome her enemies, but the Lord Jesus would overcome the gates of hell and he would crush the devil. Rebekah would never see her family again or her country again, but God's children, the spiritual offspring of Rebekah would become more than the sand of the sea. They would become conquerors through Rebekah's great great great great great ever so many greats grandson, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved them, so that the spiritual offspring of Rebekah's offspring which we call today the church of Jesus Christ, would one day number thousands of millions, an innumerable multitude. And Laban and Bethuel's blessing would be radically and wonderfully fulfilled.

So you see, God answers all the cries of this prayer, the prayers of this God-fearing Abrahamic servant in a most stunning way and he returns home with Rebekah. Now we feel, don't we, that behind this wonderful story God is in control. God is active. Everywhere we feel a heartbeat, as it were, of God.

How does God control these situations, every situation? Our lives, how does God guide his people? Surely, interwoven in Genesis 24 is this burning question: how does God control us in every detail of our lives and guide us in his way? I have just three thoughts here for you under this third thought: God's control.

First, that God guides his people sovereignly. Sovereignly. Notice what the servant says in verse 42, "I came unto the well this day, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go." If thou wilt. You see, in all that he says here, the servant, though he's crying and praying for help and guidance, acknowledges that God is sovereign on how he will guide him, and when we truly seek God's face and God's guidance in our lives, this must be the implicit foundation of our every prayer. Every prayer must have this root, "Father, not my will but thine be done." You see, God knows more than we know and he can be trusted to the uttermost. So in all of our praying, we don't simply tag God's will onto the end of our prayers, but it becomes a fundamental part of our prayers and we say, "If thou wilt, or if it may please thee, or if it could be thy will."

The truest and highest forms of prayers are prayers that we utter and then turn over into the sovereignty and the will of God and that's what you see this servant is so good at doing here. It was a humble child-like submission. He even says to Laban and Bethuel, "Tell me your answer and I'll turn aside to the right or the left. I leave it in God's hands even as I pursue the means for an answer." That's the way to live. You see, there are two wrong ways to live. One wrong way is to say, "Well, it's in God's hands. I'll do nothing." The other wrong way is to live and to say, "Well, I've got to do everything and push God away." The real balance between sovereignty and responsibility is to use the means of grace and then say, "If thou wilt."

God guides his people sovereignly. Secondly, God guides his people scripturally. The servant lives in a day of continuing revelation, continuing supernatural revelation. God spoke by lots, by dreams, by visions. They didn't have the whole Bible so God revealed himself in a variety of supernatural ways, temporary ways, declaring his will, until the

day would come that the entire Bible would be written and God would have us operate today out of the word of God so that his will would be known through his word which is much more challenging, in some ways, but also broader and deeper and more profound in guiding us.

So in the New Testament we read in Hebrews 1 that in the past, in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets in various ways through visions and dreams, etc., but in these last days he has spoken to us in his Son. So the author to the Hebrews is saying to us that with the coming of Jesus Christ, God has reached the climax of his revelation that is known in Jesus and that is recorded for us in the pages of Scripture. So we need nothing beyond the Bible revealing to us the Lord Jesus Christ and that's why Paul can write to Timothy that all Scripture is God-breathed, profitable for reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness so that the man of God can be complete. And the psalmist even points forward to that when he says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

So this is God's normal way of guiding and directing his people to do so through the precepts and the principles of Scripture. Now, that's not to say that there is never a time when God based on scriptural principle doesn't prompt us or nudge us in a certain direction through ways that we can't explain through his providential mysterious dealings with us, but we never go that route, we never take that route apart from the principles of Scripture. We never say, "Oh, I just have a feeling I've got to go this way. It's unbiblical, it's sinful but God is telling me to." No, that's your own voice telling you to, or your own sinful desires telling you to.

So, no, we don't use this particular method of approach, the Gideon fleece setting method, or this servant fleece setting method, as it were, at the well saying, "If she comes to me, if she says I'll give you drink, and I'll give your camels drink also, then let her be the one." We don't use that method anymore. We don't try to force God into a box to answer our prayers when we will. This is actually an inferior method. God wants us to grow up, not to be little children, to be told directly, "Do this. Do that." You know, like a parent does to a little child, you've got to give specific directions. God wants us to think through the principles of his word and so seek to know his will through the lattice of Scripture.

So God leads us sovereignly, he leads us scripturally, and thirdly, he leads us corporately. Corporately and that's implied behind these verses, you see. Abraham doesn't just act solo. He and his servant, and no doubt Isaac too, discuss this matter together. Isaac must be involved here. It's not just one man pursuing one course and that's the way God normally guides us as well. We're not meant to be Lone Rangers in our inner closets, never consulting other people, just praying, praying, praying, but we're meant to believe in the communion of saints. We're meant to ask for guidance, especially from mature, godly, wise, confidential Christians. Every Christian should have one or two accountability partners in whom he can confide and ask support and wisdom and prayer and seek counsel.

I'm always struck by Acts 16. You know how Paul is trying to go various places to preach the Gospel there and it seems like the Spirit of God was providentially hindering him in some way, and he wasn't really sure what to do. Then he has a vision, you remember. This too is, of course, before the Canon is complete. He sees in his vision a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." And what does Luke say? What does Luke, the writer, say when he records it? He concludes, "that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel in Macedonia." Not just Paul. You see, Paul after he came out of that vision, he must have gone to Luke and said, "This is the vision I had. What do you think, Luke?" And Luke must have felt the call as well so Luke says, "We both felt called. Us." Paul involves him.

That's what makes a church function. It's not just a minister or two ministers that rule the church. We have 20 consistory members and we talk together and we listen to what the congregation says. We dialog with you and we dialog with one another and we wait on the Lord and we pray. You see, where there's a multitude of counselors, there's wisdom. So we seek God's guidance through corporate unity in the faith. God normally guides his people that way so we're not left to freelance our way through the Christian life. We're meant to be brothers and sisters to each other, praying, giving counsel, seeking wisdom from each other.

Well, God then controls this whole situation, guides it, and finally the servant returns with Rebekah to come to meet Isaac. Now what a wonderful wonderful meeting that is. It's a touching meeting. After a long journey through the desert in which Rebekah must have often wondered if she would ever see Isaac in the end, after all those weeks, but then she'd look down at the gifts and she'd look at the bracelets and the different things and she'd take courage. "Yes, these are the gifts of Isaac. One day I'm going to meet Isaac himself."

Then the day happened. Isaac looks up. He's in the field meditating. He looks up and he sees the camels are coming. At the same moment, Rebekah eyes him from a distance and she says to the servant, "Who's that?" He says, "That's Isaac. That's your future husband." And she slips off the camel immediately, quickly to show respect for her intended husband, and she puts on a wedding veil to indicate that she's a bride. And for a few minutes, Isaac, you can just see it, can't you? Isaac and the servant talking together. The servant tells all the details, the Bible says of what transpired. And Isaac whose name, you remember, means laughter, must have laughed with profound delight as he hears about how Rebekah worked for 1 ½ hours pulling up all those jugs of water from the well, feeding all those camels. Amazing. What a woman this must be. He must be rejoicing and then he must have been weeping tears of joy when the servant tells him how that he spoke to her and how she was willing to go in front of her family. She's willing to leave all behind for Isaac. "I will go."

Oh, Isaac's heart must have swelled with love. Joy was everywhere and marriage was immediate. Verse 67 strikingly says, "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." What do we see here? Well, we see, don't we, this powerful

operative principle of commitment to one another. The commitment. The Ephesians 5 commitment of Jesus Christ to his church. The bridegroom, the greater Isaac, and the commitment of the church back to Christ. The bride to Jesus. The church to Jesus Christ in the most wonderful way. Here in this verse we see a premonition of husband's love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. And wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord.

And I'd like to suggest to you that there is really five-fold commitment operative here, but since our time is fast gone, I'm going to save this for another sermon next week, a five-fold commitment between Isaac and Rebekah in this wonderful marriage as they meet one another and as they love one another and as they commit their way and their life to one another.

Let me just close then, this morning, with one major application. I want to look with you at this thought, that just as Isaac and Rebekah are brought together by the invitation of the servant, so today by the invitation of the servants of God coming to you from this pulpit, you are also invited to a marriage, yes, to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ. God's servants must also be in haste. They must run hither and yon, as it were, declaring the word of God, seeking to fill the earth, seeking to fill this building with the invitations of the Gospel, seeking to ask you to press onto your souls the question: wilt thou go with this man? This morning as I close, I want an answer. I want an answer to this glorious and beautiful question: will you go with Jesus Christ? Will you? Is greater Isaac, this perfect Isaac, Isaac we'll see that in coming weeks made some big mistakes. He sinned. The greater Isaac never sinned. The greater Isaac is a perfect bridegroom, a perfect husband, a perfect Savior, a perfect Lord, a perfect kinsman, a near kinsman. He's bone of our bone. He's flesh of our flesh. He's closer than a second cousin. He's our elder brother and he stands with extended arms and says to us, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Yes, he stands with bleeding arms. Arms that have been wounded in the house of his relatives, in the house of his friends. Arms that we have wounded. Stretched out on the cross for us, for our sins have nailed home the nails that drove him to the cross, and yet he says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." Come to the marriage but also remember that he says, "He that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Dear congregation, heaven is near to every believer. Hell is near to every unbeliever. But Jesus Christ, dear unbeliever, is still nearer to you than hell is at this very moment because at this very moment, he is still inviting you, "Will you go with me? Will you be willing to forsake all and take the spiritual pilgrimage journey to walk in the narrow way that leads to everlasting life? To serve me and to fear me? To know me, to love me, to rejoice in me?"

So from sermon to sermon, we lay out the bracelets, the golden bracelets, the golden necklaces. We lay out all the gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ. He promises life eternal. We try the best we can, you see, to make you fall in love with Jesus and what he has to offer you and who he is. He's altogether lovely. But we can't force you. The servant can't force Rebekah. You have to be conquered. You have to be conquered by the Spirit working in

your heart so that when the question comes, "Will you go with this God-man Jesus?" You may say with conviction, "I will go. I will go." And you must go.

What a blessed choice Rebekah by the grace of God made. She was brought out of the semi-Christian worldly environment and brought under the covenant of Abraham and there she was taught the ways of the Lord by Abraham, by her dear husband Isaac, and there she learned with her husband to call upon the name of the Lord. There she learned the revealed covenantal truth. There she became a mother of Israel. There she was saved, no doubt, from curse and damnation. Maybe her faith was infantile before. It seems so, but now it grew abundantly and though she, too, made many mistake, she came to love the greater Isaac, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, dear friends, he's a worthy Savior to serve, to love, to know. Don't wait. Yes, there will be people that say, "You can wait. You can wait 10 days." There will be Labans and Bethuels in your life that say, "Stay here with us a little while longer." But it's urgent. It's urgent and that's why the whole language of this chapter is written the way it is. That's why Rebekah was running. That's why Laban was running. That's why the servant was running. It's urgent. You might die tonight. You must be born again. You must go with this man. You must admit no delay.

So I lay the offer before you one more time. Don't drag your feet. Don't hold it between two opinions. Say like the servant, "Hinder me not." Say like Rebekah, "I will go." Let your cry be, "World, sin, devil, hinder me not. Affliction, trial, disappointment, hinder me not. By the grace of God, I will go." Rebekah said, "I will go." What do you say? Amen.

Announcer. Thank you for listening to Doctrine for Life with Dr. Joel Beeke. William Aames said, "Theology is the doctrine of living to God. May God write the doctrines of the Bible upon your heart so that you may truly live."