

Genesis

Chapter 26 - God's Blessing to His Beloved Children

3 Invaluable Blessings (vs. 1-11)

Genesis 26:1-11: Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. The LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.” So Isaac lived in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say, “my wife,” thinking, “the men of

the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.” It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, ‘She is my sister’?” And Isaac said to him, “Because I said, ‘I might die on account of her.’” Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.” So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, “He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

If in fact you've ever been a parent or parented in some way, you realize that there are certain things that you want to pass on to those that you love. Your hope is that they continue to be okay and that they're protected and that they're directed in a way that is right for them. Your hope is that, but you can't control those things, especially

as you come to the end of your life and you realize that now, you can't even control whether you live or die. So, now you must leave this earth with those hopes dashed. Who's going to see them through?

As we go through the book of Genesis, I think one of the things that's very clear is that God is a God of relationship. It's His idea. The whole relationship thing is God's idea. If you remember back in the garden, He goes, "It's not good for man to be alone." So, He's actually saying, "I know you didn't think about it, but I did." And as we talked about at the very beginning, God had an exercise for Adam right from the very get-go. And that was he was going to name the animals and he was naming them, and they were all coming together, male and female. And I can just see God going, "Are you getting some kind of vibe here that maybe someone isn't by your side?" So, Nevertheless, Adam still didn't come up with it, so He just turned and He says, "It's not good for you to be alone." So, He brings a woman into the relationship and He begins to teach him what a relationship is. We know that man doesn't really comprehend the ramifications of that or the definition of

what a relationship really is. 1 Corinthians 13 gives us that wonderful picture of what love is. And of course, we know that society doesn't even comprehend what love is. They perceive it as something that they get from someone else rather than something that you give. That's why John 3:16 is so important, "For God so loved... that He gave..." And it's making a clear description of what love is about. It really is about thinking of others, as Philippians will say, more highly than yourself. But man comes into the world, and he sins and then he turns and blames the other person. And he says, "Well, God created this person so I could blame them." But that's not why He created them. And then we see Cain killing his brother because of the competition and the jealousy and the envy that was involved in that. And clearly, we see that man doesn't understand what relationship is about. God does something interesting with the flood. He sticks a bunch of family members in this boat together, and they're going to have to learn to be a family. And it's really one of the first times that we see the beginning of the beginnings of family, in the ark, and the functioning of sorts. That is to say, working together for a common cause.

God is the God of relationship. And we come to God calling Abraham, and in His calling, He turns to him before he has any children, and He says, "I'm going to make you a great nation and I'm going to bless you." And here's the wonderful caveat, "I'm going to make you a blessing. And so, your family is going to bless all these people." Of course, Abraham was one that longed for a child for 25 years and probably longer. From the time that he was 75, he was called, but we know that there was probably a longing before that, but his wife was unable to have a child. And God yet promised him something that was impossible. So, as Abraham begins to deal with this great desire, God finally grants him something beyond his comprehension, and that is this young man, Isaac. A child named "you laughed" because they laughed when they heard that at Abraham's age of 100 and Sarah's age of about 90, that they were going to have a child.

Nevertheless, God revealed His grace to them and a child was born. The promises then were poured into this child and the hope was that he would not only be directed by God, but that he would be safe, he'd be preserved, and that God would bless him greatly; that the blessings of

God that were upon Abraham would be upon his children as well.

We come into a passage in Chapter 26 in which Isaac is now probably at least 75. And what we glean from the first verse, Abraham has just passed away. We believe this for a number of reasons. One is that it makes mention of there were certain things that happened and occurred in the days of Abraham, which seems to make reference to the days past rather than the days present. And then as well, when he goes down to this particular place, the land of the Philistines, he doesn't go to Abraham, he goes to Abimelech; which had he gone to this particular area, which is where Abraham had been living, had Abraham been alive, he would have gone directly to him. So, at this juncture, Abraham has passed. The twins are now 15 to 16 years of age, and Isaac, who had the twins when he was 60, is now around 75. The question is, does he retain that blessing from God, the blessing that He promised? And once again, let's just go back Genesis 12 to remind ourselves of that initial commitment and promise that God made to Abraham as He called him out. And if you

look in particular, the reward is clear that God calls him to go to a land that he doesn't know anything about. We read about that in Hebrews 11, and it makes a specific mention of the fact that he was going into a place he'd never seen. He didn't know exactly how it was going to work, but God told him to go and he went. He just obeyed the Lord.

And it says this,

(Genesis 12:1) “Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you;

(Genesis 12:2) And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

(Genesis 12:3) And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.””

This is a commitment that God made to Abraham, and this is one that He's going to see through.

As we come to this, of course, we realize that obviously Abraham had dreams and aspirations for his kids. The question is, what preserves those dreams and aspirations? And I would say, only One who is eternal could preserve that because you're not going to be around. So, the graciousness of God begins to reveal this. And it is in this Chapter 26 that we see God coming into the life of Isaac at a very crucial time in his life.

Now, I have to make mention of this, that in this particular passage, 15 years prior, Isaac had prayed to the Lord. He prayed to the Lord because his wife was not bearing any children. And at that juncture when he did pray, I just want to emphasize this, that they had waited 20 years before he prayed. I'm going, "Why did it take so long for you to pray if in fact you believed that the Lord was the only source that would bring birth through your household? Why is it you would wait 20 years?"

Nevertheless, he waited 20 years and then he prayed.

If you look in Genesis 25:21, it says, just simply,

“Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.”

Wow! I don't know if at that particular moment he had a “Ford bulb” over his head, and he goes, “Wow, that was a better idea.” But at that juncture, he realized that maybe he should have been praying all along or he should have talked to God right from the very get-go. He saw God work and God then produced the twins.

As you come down to Chapter 26, now we have a famine that is in the land, and Scripture is actually interjecting a parallel passage to us. And that is Genesis 12; at first when Abraham was called out and he was called into the land, God met him with a famine. And He goes to Abraham, and He says, we'll just make this rhetorical, “So, what are you going to do now?” And Abraham goes down to Egypt. Of course, Egypt's the smart way to go. It's the strategic way to go because that's where the Nile River is. And if you're in a famine, you still have the Nile River. Nevertheless, God didn't want him to go there, and he was putting his trust in his strategy rather than putting his

trust in God. And God was going to teach Abraham how to put his trust in Him. It was an interesting process.

Isaac comes with a history, and he comes with a history of his father. And he comes with the understanding that God is the provider of these things. We have Scripture written to us, so we know that these things are recorded initially. Traditionally, they were spoken of one to the other, and it was preserved in that way, and ultimately Moses would pen these passages and remind us. So, we know that Isaac knew that his father had gone through a similar famine. i.e. Genesis 12 at the beginning of his calling, which was about 100 years prior to this. So, there was a great famine in the land. And he also knows that his father went down to Egypt. And he also knows that God took care of Abraham in spite of his bad decisions. Nevertheless, it was very clear that's not what God wanted him to do. God had given him into the Promised Land. He told him to abide in the Promised Land. He went outside the Promised Land because of the strategy that was involved in that.

In this passage, Isaac's going to go through something extremely similar. A famine's going to come into the land. It's almost like he's tested the same way that his father was tested. So, it starts off this way, and Scripture wants us to know that it is purposely paralleling this with the original famine.

So, it starts off,

(Genesis 26:1) “Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham...”

When Scripture is giving us this comparison, it wants us to compare. And it's wanting us to see the contrast, perhaps the way that Isaac handles it, or perhaps the comparison in which he does.

“... So Isaac went to Gerar...”

Now, Gerar, once again, is the area in which Abraham ultimately ended up living. It says nothing of his presence at this juncture. So, once again, our understanding is that he is already gone and has been buried in Machpelah, where his wife had been buried. So, here he is going to a

place that is a familiar territory. And I think right off the bat, one of the things that Scripture is making reference to is when we have difficulties coming to our life, our tendency is to go back to the familiar. You have issues in your life. And though you might read in the Bible somewhere and it says, "You need to trust in the Lord," your tendency will probably be to go to something that you usually go to. You'll go to the familiar place in which you feel some kind of comfort and your thought is that this is the way to handle it without really giving much thought to God.

Now, I have to say this about the space in between Chapter 25 and 26- Do you have like white space in your Bible? There's white space in that particular place. And what we have is, between those two chapters, 15 years. And we have 15 years of silence. And the reason why I bring that up is that we don't have any relationship at all made reference to of Isaac with God. None. I mean, we go through Chapter 12 in Genesis, and we see Abraham and right at the beginning, he begins to give a sacrifice and builds an offering to God and communicates with Him.

And throughout those first 25 years, he's communicating with Him quite a bit. Nevertheless, Isaac is now married. He prayed one time for his wife. That's one moment he probably goes, "Okay, this is one thing I can't handle myself." And so, he turns to God for that. And now for 15 years, we have no record of him communicating with God or relationship with God in any way. The famine is going to maybe stir him up; cause him to think. Nevertheless, he doesn't turn directly to God in the famine. What he does is he goes to the familiar, and he goes to Gerar. Now, the name Gerar just simply makes reference to a place that was a lodge place and it was probably built by the Philistines as a place that you could lodge and probably the hope was that he would go to one of the wells that his father had dug in that particular area. Remember Beersheba is one of the wells that he dug with the Philistines in that particular realm; and so, he's heading to a place that's familiar and a place that maybe will give him some sort of comfort in addition to the fact that his father had frequented there and there had been already a relationship built. Maybe Abimelech will help him. Maybe

the king there will help him or perhaps he can find some benefit from the well.

(Genesis 26:1) “... So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.”

Once again, making reference to the fact that he seems to be approaching somebody or a particular region that's familiar. Now, you would be in error to think that this is the same Abimelech that his father knew. It could possibly be, but it probably isn't. And the reason why I say that is Abimelech is not a proper name. It is that which describes a position. So, “Abimelech,” “Ab,” making reference to “father,” “melech” is king. So, “father king”. They were living in a day and age, in the Book of Genesis, at this particular juncture, in which the kings were patriarchs. That's why you have Melchizedek in Genesis and there he is, the king over Salem. And once again, we believe him to be Shem because patriarchs were in control, and Abraham was over his family, and it was the fathers that were over. So, “father king” would be the title that would be given to those that were in charge. And so, we have another “father king” at this particular

juncture. Nevertheless, it is in a familiar territory. It is in the land of the Philistines where he had gone.

Strangely enough, the Philistines, just to make mention of this, and if you were to go back to Genesis 10, you would actually see where they came from. The Philistines came from the land of Cush or Mizraim, which is Egypt, which means that they actually came from Ham, the son of Noah, which was not the blessed group, but Shem was. So, he's actually going to his relatives of Ham for help rather than turning to God's people. Nevertheless, there he is with the Philistines. And the name "Philistines" just seemed to make reference to the fact that they were immigrants. So, how did people from Egypt get in the land where Abraham was? They migrated. The Philistines are there, and so he's going there and his perception is that "Maybe I can get some help." Now, what's also interesting about going down to this area from where he was is that he's heading south. And so, not only is he going to a place that is familiar where his father had lived, but it's probably a lodging place or a stop-off place to another very familiar place, and that is Egypt. So, he's

almost down to Egypt at this particular juncture. He's halfway there, and once again making the same error that his father made heading down to the Nile River.

So, it reads this way in verse 2,

(Genesis 26:2) “The LORD appeared to him and said...”

It's the graciousness of God to appear; to make Himself known. The question is, why is God making Himself known specifically to Isaac? Why is He dealing with Isaac in such a magnanimous way, in such a kind and benevolent way? And I would say, because he is Abraham's son.

What we're going to be looking at specifically in this particular passage is, God gives blessings and watches over those that we love. It's already been made evident specifically with Abraham where he had his concern for Lot and his nephew going into a land and a place called Sodom and Gomorrah. He couldn't have chosen a worse place to go. And nevertheless, God sends His angels to protect him, knowing that Abraham is then going to make intercessory prayer to Him for Lot. God, before he even does that, has sent His angels to rescue him.

We oftentimes quote Psalm 138:8, which says,

“The LORD will accomplish what concerns me...”

It's a great passage because it's making reference to the fact that clearly God knows the things that concern us. And if we have a relationship with Him, He's concerned with the things that we're concerned with. You have family members and family members go through a difficult time. And when family members go through a difficult time, then you start going through a difficult time because, I think, that you actually care for them. And it is that connection that causes you to feel that way. It is to be noted that Psalm 138, though it will end the way that it ends, “God will accomplish what concerns me,” it'll begin in Chapter 139, “No one knows me better than God. He knows everything about me. He wove me in my mother's womb. I mean, He knows everything about me.” So, if in fact, for a moment, you might think, “Well, I don't know if He really knows what really concerns me,” He knows you better than yourself.

And that's why that particular Psalm ends,

(Psalm 139:23) “Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

(Psalm 139:24) And see if there be any hurtful way in
me...”

“Because You know me better than I know me. And I trust in You for this.” So, what we're seeing is God's intervention beyond the grave of Abraham. You know those days that you go, “man, I just wish I could help somebody in my household, but I can't be there.” And God goes, “I know. We're doing this on purpose.” Because this is time for now Isaac to come to God; Isaac to trust in God. And God saw the heart of Abraham and knew how much he loved this son. What do you think, He's just going to let him wander around and do nothing? God's going to pay him a visit.

Now, the passage is clear. Isaac is already making decisions on his own. He's unilaterally making his own decisions, deciding he's going to go this place or that place, and he doesn't seem to be asking for God's advice, nor has he brought an offering before God, nor has he

prayed, from what we know, for 15 years. Nevertheless, God shows up. It's a great passage.

(Genesis 26:2) "The LORD appeared to him..."

Which seems to convey that, "*rā'â*," He actually was there in his presence; He probably appeared to him like with Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. And there He was and He appeared in like physical form as Christ came to earth in such a form.

"The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt..."

Now, sometimes you wonder how God really conveys the things that He conveys. I mean, you read the passage, and you go, "Okay, so how did He say that? I mean, was He frowning when He said that?" There is a Hebrew way of grammar that is used in particular that is called the Jussive mood- grammatical examples. And so, in this particular passage, it is used. The interesting thing about the Jussive is that in the request or in the command that is given, there is the inference of one conveying how they feel or their desire. And so, you could actually probably

read it this way, “It would be My strong desire of you not to go down to Egypt.”

The reason why I bring that up is that it's one of the great benefits, I believe, of God working in our lives, one of the great blessings, is that He begins to direct us in ways that are not intimidating or oppressive. But He works in our life in such a way that He beckons us, like a shepherd with sheep. And so, you have this interesting dialogue that happens in this particular setting in which God makes His presence known, and He turns to him, and He goes, “I really wish you don't go down there.” Now, we're not to assume that He's not giving an imperative, but we are to assume that He's not coming across cross.

He goes on and says this, in fact, beyond the fact that He doesn't want him to go someplace, “I need you to stay here. I need you to just remain where you are and listen to what I say. Just listen to Me.” How wonderful it is that God just comes with the simplicity of, “I'll tell you what to do. Just listen to Me.” Now, the world doesn't have that benefit, but we have the wonderful blessing in which God promised us, “I'll direct you.” I mean, how many times

have we read Proverbs 3:5-6, right? “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will what?” “I'll tell you what to do. I'll direct your paths.”

(Genesis 26:2) “The LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you.

(Genesis 26:3) Sojourn in this land...”

“Remain” probably is more the word that's inferred within the text.

“Sojourn (remain) in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.

(Genesis 26:4) I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

It's almost like we're seeing the very quote that He gave to his father.

Now, watch the very next verse. It starts off with something.

(Genesis 26:5) “Because...”

It has the connotation of reward. In other words, “I'm rewarding your Dad.” Why? “Because he did what I told him to do. And because your Dad...” Now, I just want to emphasize this. He's not saying, “Isaac, you've been a really good boy. Isaac, you've done everything right up to this point. Isaac, you've been talking to Me. You've had a relationship with Me. Everything's wonderful.” None of that's happened. In fact, at this particular juncture, Isaac's been trying to work things out himself. But He turns, and He says, “You know why I'm here? Because I love your Dad. And you know what your Dad did? He did what I told him to do. And he trusted Me.”

There's an interesting passage in 1 John, and 1 John actually declares, “The one who loves the Father loves the son born of Him. In other words, “If you really love Me, you'll love My kids.” God is telling us that. One of the reasons, you know, people say, “Yeah, I love God, I love God.” God goes, “Well, why are you being so mean to My

kids?” “Because they're not wonderful.” “So what? They're My kids.”

(Genesis 26:5) “Because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.”

“Because of this, I'm giving you all this.”

The passage is relating to us that the presence of God is coming in as a result of a close relationship. And the close relationship was not God with Isaac, but God with Abraham. And it actually begin to spill over upon his children the blessings. It is the blessings that continue on. Now, lest you think at this moment that your pastor is saying that people are saved because of their father's salvation, that's not true either. As one movie put, “God has no grandchildren.” But what it is saying is that God works on behalf of those who love Him. And He knows what concerns us and He knows what's important to us. The tendency is for us to try to work things out ourselves and think that we can control the universe. And God goes, “Not only can you not control the universe, but you're not going to be here much longer. So, what you need to do is

really focus on your relationship with Me. I'll take care of them.” And it's a wonderful principle as you begin to see it unfold.

So, it then says in verse 6,

(Genesis 26:6) “So Isaac lived in Gerar.

(Genesis 26:7) When the men of the place asked about his wife...”

He falls into the same trap of his father. He goes, once again, into strategy or contingencies or perhaps some kind of bargaining compromise that he begins to show.

“... he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say, “my wife,” thinking, “the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.””

Probably these men didn't know his father Abraham, even though maybe the kings had writings about Abraham; these obviously didn't. So, his concern was that because his wife is so beautiful, they might kill him for his wife. And if they think she's his sister, then they wouldn't.

(Genesis 26:8) “It came about, when he had been there a long time...”

Which is interesting, at that particular juncture, it's almost like God's going, "So, why aren't they doing anything? Why are they not bothering you? Why are they not even talking to your sister?" That's pretty interesting.

"It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah."

"Okay, this is not your sister."

(Genesis 26:9) "Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, 'Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, 'She is my sister'?' And Isaac said to him, 'Because I said, 'I might die on account of her.''"

(Genesis 26:10) Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.""

The papers are at least clear about that.

(Genesis 26:11) "So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, 'He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.'"

It's a great passage because it makes reference, once again, to the power of a relationship. And there are a number of things that happen, but I've actually just listed for you three invaluable blessings that you and I receive based on God's relationship with perhaps those that love Him.

I know that when I was younger, I was into a lot of interesting and crazy stuff, and I know the Lord, in spite of me, protected me as my parents were praying and as they demonstrated love for the Lord.

The blessings that we begin to receive in the midst of all this are pretty clear within the passage, and let me just name them for you. The first is that you receive the blessing of direction. God comes, and He goes, "This is what I want you to do; this is what I don't want you to do." God begins to direct those that He loves. And once again, it's not necessarily because they're doing the right thing or because they're even searching for God, but God in His grace begins to work on behalf of those that He loves in the lives of those that He loves. And so, we see God directing specifically Isaac, and He says, "You don't

want to go down there. You want to stay in this particular land.” Now, when we read this and we go on and read the event or the narrative, we come to a place in which we go, “Yeah, but he was in a hostile place and he was afraid.” The only reason he was afraid was his imagination, because God had placed him exactly where he needed to be, with a king that already had a history, at least perhaps from his own father, handed down to him that you don't mess with Abraham or his kids. That's already been made clear. In fact, one of the wells was actually dug for that particular purpose, so they would remember that. So, there it is sticking in front of their face, and God says, “I stuck you here because this is a place that's not going to do what you're afraid it's going to do. I'm sovereign over this place.” So, God comes to him, and He goes, “Don't go down to Egypt. That's more dangerous. You stay in this land. This is the land I've prepared for you anyway. I'm going to take care of you.” Wasn't His promise, “I'm going to be with you”? “Now, just listen to Me. I'll tell you what to do.” And then He turns to Isaac, and He goes, literally in the text, “Sit.” That's actually in the passage. When He says, “remain,”

it's actually the word “sit”. You guys have dogs? “Sit.” That's what He says. So, he stays. And it is that kind of direction that is a gracious act that begins to work on behalf of those that we love, once again, not on the merit of things that they had done.

The second thing that we see within the passage is that there is a correction that comes into play. “Who the Lord loves, He disciplines,” right? He corrects. The difference between punishment and discipline is that punishment is you getting what you deserve; discipline always has with it the focus of correction. So, discipline is maintained until the behavior is changed, but never a source of your getting what you deserve.

Let me show you Psalm 103, if you will look there with me. Another one of those great Psalms. Don't you love this? You're probably going, “Pastor, you go to the Psalm so many times.” I love these wonderful words of life. Aren't they?

It starts off,

(Psalm 103:1) “Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

(Psalm 103:2) Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;

(Psalm 103:3) Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases.”

I mean, He's a God that actually cares for you.

(Psalm 103:4) “Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

(Psalm 103:5) Who satisfies your years with good things...”

You mean God is actually concerned about things that I'm concerned with?

(Psalm 103:6) “The LORD performs righteous deeds And judgments for all who are oppressed.

(Psalm 103:7) He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel.

(Psalm 103:8) The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

(Psalm 103:9) He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.”

Watch verse 10, a very important verse.

(Psalm 103:10) “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

In other words, He's not punishing you; He's correcting you. He's not giving you what you deserve.

(Psalm 103:11) “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

(Psalm 103:12) As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

(Psalm 103:13) Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.”

What is He saying? “I'm taking over the job of watching over your kids. I know what you desire. I'm going to bring them home. I'm going to take care of this guy.” So, He begins to direct him.

Now, Isaac is now in a particular situation and scenario in which he thinks he has to do something to protect himself. I mean, it's strange that some 15, maybe 20 years

ago, he knew his wife couldn't have a child, but he prayed to God for that. But now this one, there's a famine. He goes, "I think I got this." And God goes, "You don't got this." So, God begins to come into his life and begins to orchestrate it. But I don't know if you noticed this or not, but God provided something that is invaluable and one of the greatest blessings that God displays to those that are His beloved. You know what it is? He not only corrects us, but He corrects us in such a way that we can admit that we made a mistake. If you've ever been in the presence of somebody that said, "Now, you need to confess, and if you confess we're going to kill you," you can pretty well guess that maybe the person may lie because there's a sense of oppression just hanging over them. But if somebody says, "Look, go ahead and admit it. We've got this taken care of. You don't have to worry. You're not going to be punished for it." So, Abimelech goes, "You should have told us, we could have hurt you." Wait, you're not mad at him? You don't want to kill him? God had placed him in a place in which he was free to confess. And you begin to see one of the great blessings of God in the correction. God begins to work in people's life, and He

goes, "You can confess your sins now, it's okay. It's okay." That's a gift. Because when you're afraid, that's when you don't become transparent. And in order for you to have a relationship, you have to be transparent, right?

So, here he is in this wonderful place. And on top of this, God protects him. And I think the key is that the protection is without any human effort by him. Up to this point, he's been strategizing. I mean, we all have kind of a game plan when situations arise. You know, we go to Gerar, and we go, "Okay, if that doesn't work out, we got plan B and that's Egypt." And so, God sort of interrupts his plan B, and He goes, "Don't go down to Egypt. I really don't want you to go down to Egypt. This is not a good thing for you." It's the graciousness of God that takes away all those plan Bs. Because, if you think about it, when you start with the contingencies and you start trying to work them in your head, that's wearying because there's no end to them. "What if this happens," you know? I mean, "What if the stock market crashes? Then I've got to buy gold." Well, what if they take your gold? I mean, you can go... I don't know. How many places can

you go? **You're not safe unless God makes you safe.** And so, there is this wonderful protection without human effort. And we actually see Abimelech going, "If anybody touches that woman, I'm going to kill him." And I could just see Isaac going, "I don't have to do nothing. My wife's safe and I don't have to do anything." It's the graciousness of God.

Now, what Scripture is doing in the Old Testament is it's giving us a parallel. And the parallel is that God is all about relationships. And so, it's helping us understand that when Christ comes, it's going to be about a relationship. And the fundamental point is, "I know you guys are sinners. I know you messed up. And I know you don't remotely do the right things. But here's the deal- I'm sending My Son and I really love Him and He does everything I tell Him to." He's done everything God says. In fact, Jesus will make statements of this in particular. He says, "Everything I see the Father do, I do in like manner." And for this reason, in John 10, Jesus will say, "The Father loves Me because I give my life for the sheep." And so,

God will say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Now, what do you think will happen to the ones that Jesus loves? And the point is that what God is looking for is for you to have a relationship with Jesus. If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." If in fact you say you love the Father, you'll love the child born of the Father. So, we actually receive benefits from God not based on the merits of things that we have done in righteousness, but because of His righteousness. And God brings us into the wonderful benefits. And let me tell you what He does. He begins to direct us. Because we love Christ and because we believe in Him. Once again, we make reference to this time and time again in John 6, as the crowds were asking Jesus, "What does the Father want us to do?" And Jesus goes, "Believe in Me." And as you begin to put your trust in Him and you begin to walk with Him and you begin to form a relationship with Him, you're not going to be perfect, granted. But you love Him and He loves you and because He loves you, the Father loves you. And He's going to direct your paths. And you know what He's going

to do? John 14, John 15, He's going to send the Spirit of God to you and He's going to remind you of things that you need to do. I mean, it goes beyond a conscience. You know how the conscience says, "You better not do that. You're going to be in trouble." It goes into the realm of Holy Spirit, which says, "You know what you need to do? You need to sacrifice for somebody else. You need to walk in love." I mean, I can't tell you how many times I thought, "Where did that come from? Because I'm not feeling it." But the Spirit of God is directing my paths and He's moving me, "Now, don't you do that. I wouldn't go there." And I can feel the Spirit of God moving. Can't you? It's the presence of God because of the fact of the relationship that we have. And God begins to direct our paths and He corrects us. But He corrects us in such a way that I'm free to admit what the problems are. 1 John, as we've oftentimes quoted, "You say you have no sin, you're just plain lying. The truth is not in you." But it goes on, it says in 1 John 1:9, "But if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive you." It's okay. For the first time in your life, your hand was found in the cookie jar, and God goes, "It's okay. Just admit your hand was in

the cookie jar.” And you go, “I’m not in trouble?” “You’re not in trouble. I just want you to admit it.” Because Romans 8:1 says, “There’s therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” And it’s one of the reasons why, as Galatians will repeat over and over again, you’ve been called to freedom. Romans 8 will say the same thing. You no longer have the spirit of fear, but you have the spirit of adoption whereby you cry out, “Abba! Father!” And so, it’s the Father that’s correcting you, but He’s not doing it in a judging way. In other words, you’re not getting what you deserve. We’re just correcting bad behavior. And it’s the goodness of God. It’s one of the great blessings that He gives us. And of course, the greatest blessing at the very end of this passage is He’s going to protect us. And I’m thoroughly convinced that He protects us not only in certain conditions or certain places that we are, but I believe, like Paul says, “I know the Lord will bring me safely home.” And I don’t have to worry about all of the things that most people have to worry about.

Let me show you a passage here in Matthew 6. We'll just end with this passage.

(Matthew 6:25) “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life...”

Why? “You love My Son? I love you. I'm going to take care of you.” Don't be anxious for your life. I mean, you can look at the birds and think, “Well, who takes care of them?” You're worth more than a bird. That's what he states in verse 26.

So, verse 27 says, “Which of you by being anxious can actually change anything?” I don't know if we've really thought it through, but if you've had an anxiety attack, my simple question to you is, what did you change? How did it help? I mean, the only thing you changed is maybe the fact that you were now in the hospital and no longer with us.

It goes on and says,

(Matthew 6:28) “And why are you worried about clothing? ...”

Verse 31, how does it start off?

(Matthew 6:31) “Do not worry then...”

And then it says this in verse 32,

(Matthew 6:32) “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things...”

They're worried about their clothes; they're worried about what they're going to eat; they're worried about the roof over their heads. They're worried about, “What's going to happen to me. Am I going to get into an accident today? Do I have enough insurance?” All the things that the world is worried about, He goes, “You don't have to worry about them.”

“...for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

It's one of the greatest gifts that God gives us. You don't have to worry. I'm not always going to be around for my kids. I'm not always going to be around to care for them. And quite frankly, even if I was, I couldn't watch over them. But I know a God that is concerned about the things that concern me. And what I need to do is just get right with God. And beyond that, I would say this- we

need to love the Son and trust in Him. And when we do that, God will be gracious to us, not on the basis of things that we've done, but because He just loves His Son. And how wonderful our salvation is. Isn't that a great picture in the Old Testament? It gives us that.

Closing Prayer:

Father, I give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us, demonstrated in so many different ways. The benefits that You give us that we weren't even aware of- You're directing in our lives and You're correcting in our lives and You're protecting in our lives. And so, Lord, we give You thanks.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, we're asking you to focus on the relationship, because the relationship has tremendous consequences and tremendous benefits.