

## Genesis 26:13-35

With the spectre of famine dogging his steps, Isaac made a bad decision. Yes, he was probably on his way to Egypt when God stopped him.

Genesis 26:2 **"And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of."**

Isaac obeyed God's command and forsook Egypt, which in scripture is a picture of this present evil world.

However, with all of Canaan before him, he chose Gerar.

Gerar might have given him some relief from famine, as it was by the sea coast, and

admittedly it was still in Canaan, but  
it was a very wicked place.

Oh, it offered many of the so-called  
advantages found in Egypt, but it also  
offered many of the same temptations.  
In fact, Gerar intimidated Isaac to such an  
extent that he resorted to lying, and  
lost his testimony before the heathen.

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Last week we learned that Gerar is the place  
of compromise.

For the Christian, it is where he goes to  
get as close to the world as he can,  
while maintaining his fellowship with  
God's people.

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However, in Isaac's case, we have a  
question.

If Gerar was such a bad place, then why did God bless him so abundantly while he was there?

V 12 **"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him."**

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As far as we know, Isaac had always been a herdsman, but now he **"sowed in that land."**

Apparently this was the first time that he had ventured into the raising of crops. And certainly it was a smart move. No doubt by growing and storing a large quantity of feed, he was trying to famine-proof his operation.

And the Lord certainly blessed him. A hundredfold works out to 10,000%.

If you can do that well on the stock market,  
you'll be another Warren Buffett.

But the question remains, if Isaac was in  
the wrong place, if he was in the place  
of compromise, then why did God bless  
him so abundantly?

And not only did the LORD bless him, He kept  
right on blessing him.

V 13-14 **"And the man waxed great, and went  
forward, and grew until he became very  
great:**

**14: For he had possession of flocks,  
and possessions of herds, and great  
store of servants: and the Philistines  
envied him."**

Certain things had improved in Isaac's life.  
He wasn't living a lie anymore.

That came to an abrupt end when Abimelech  
pulled the plug on his little scheme.

However, by his own choice, he was still  
living in the place of compromise.  
So we still haven't answered the question,  
Why did God cause him to prosper in  
Gerar?

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But before we try to answer that question, I  
think we should examine a philosophy  
that is very prevalent in society, and  
I am afraid very prevalent in the  
church.

Now, there is nothing wrong with being rich,  
provided your riches are gained without  
coercion, and in an honest manner.

Certainly God has given some men and women  
the ability to get wealth.

It is a gift of God like any other gift of  
God.

And if this gift is used for His glory, as any gift of God should be, it will be a great blessing, both in furthering God's work and meeting the needs of mankind.

However, the world usually bases its definition of success on the amount of money a person has accumulated.

It is a given.

When a person says he is doing well, he means he is making a lot of money.

And even in the church, we often equate financial success with godliness.

We make the assumption that a certain person is walking with the Lord because he is so successful.

And certainly that is possible, but not necessarily true.

It is true when it comes to the nation of Israel, but it is not usually the case for Christians.

Israel is God's earthly people, while the bride of Christ are His heavenly people.

A Christian's citizenship is in heaven, and oftentimes his rewards are sent ahead to his heavenly home.

Also, some Christians who are not walking close to the Lord at all will be quite successful financially.

While on the other hand, as we look at church history, we will find that many of God's choicest servants have lived in very humble circumstances.

So the theory that *gain is godliness* is not really valid.

In fact, in Timothy's day, this philosophy was upheld by some very undesirable individuals.

Paul warns Timothy against this type of individual in 1 Timothy 6:3-6. **"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;**  
**4: He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,**  
**5: Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.**  
**6: But godliness with contentment is great gain."**



So, if we realign our definition of success to God's definition as we see it in verse 6, it becomes a lot easier to understand Isaac's financial gains.

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Yes, there is a big difference between God's blessing and God's presence, and flocks and herds are not the Lord.

So, although Isaac enjoyed the Lord's blessing, Gerar was not the place of the Lord's presence.

And even though Isaac was not experiencing the joy of the Lord, he was experiencing the enmity of the Philistines.

V 14 **"For he had possession of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him."**

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At the risk of making another detour, I think we should look at the background of these Philistines that Isaac was dealing with.

To know anything about them, we have to turn to pages of secular history, for scripture is silent on the subject.

Of course secular history is not always reliable, but as far as we know, this group of Philistines were only a colony in Canaan at this particular time, not the regular inhabitants of the land.

Historians believe that the main body of Philistines lived elsewhere, perhaps on the island of Crete.

So, if history is correct, then this colony was not a very strong or very large one.

And not only that, but they really had no right to be in Canaan at all.

Canaan belonged to the Canaanites, and as far as God was concerned, it belonged to Israel.

However, taking advantage of the non-aggression of the rightful inhabitants, they had gotten a foothold in the land. And once in, they never left.

In fact, in the years to come, they became one of the greatest nations in Canaan.

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Now I know we don't have any scriptural authority for this information, so we can't call their presence in the land a true type of anything.

However, there is a lesson here for us.

As time went on, not only did the Philistines become the strongest nation

in Canaan, but they became Israel's strongest enemies.

In Isaac's day, they were already living in Canaan, the land that would someday be Israel's territory, but as yet they were quite insignificant.

However, when Canaan was finally possessed by Israel, these same Philistines were one of the nations that remained unconquered to plague them.

In fact, when Saul reigned over Israel, they became so strong that they overthrew the children of Israel for a while.

And it wasn't until the reign of King David (who is a type of King Jesus) that they were finally brought into subjection.

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In scripture, the Philistines represent unregenerate man, and their presence in

the possession of the believer is a picture of the world's presence in Christendom.

And these false professors will remain until our Lord returns.

At times, their influence will be small, but at other times, they will prevail.

In fact, many denominations who reject the blood of Christ, the way of salvation, and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, were once vibrant churches.

Yes, they once had a testimony for Christ-- until unregenerate men, who have climbed "**up some other way,**" prevailed against the truth.

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And what had the Philistine colony of Isaac's day been busy at?

V 15-16    **"For all the wells which his father's servants had dugged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.**

**16: And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we."**

Although their predecessors had made peace with Abraham, apparently they had always resented his presence in the land.

So in spite of their covenant of non-aggression, after Abraham's death, they stopped up his wells.

Now they had taken the next step, and were asking his son to get out.

Oh, they were not strong enough to be a real threat to Isaac, as they said

themselves, "**thou art much mightier than we,**" but they always had their own ways of opposing him.

V 15 **"For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth."**

This had been a low blow, and a betrayal of their agreement with his father.

Yes, back in Genesis 20:15, Abraham had been given the right to dwell in the land:

**"And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee."**

And for a herdsman operating in a dry land, that would have obviously included the right to dig wells.

However, in spite of the king's word, his people had made trouble for Abraham.

Genesis 21:25 **"And Abraham reprov-  
ed Abimelech because of a well of water,  
which Abimelech's servants had  
violently taken away."**

So when Abimelech wanted to make a covenant of non-aggression with him, Abraham insisted that his right to own that particular well was to be included in the contract.

V 29 **"And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?**

**30: And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well."**



That agreement should have set a precedent  
for all future cases.

It should have been accepted policy that  
Abraham could dig and use wells without  
opposition.

And also, at Abimelech's own request, that  
covenant was to remain in force even  
after their death.

V 23-24 **"Now therefore swear unto me here  
by God that thou wilt not deal falsely  
with me, nor with my son, nor with my  
son's son: but according to the  
kindness that I have done unto thee,  
thou shalt do unto me, and to the land  
wherein thou hast sojourned.**

**24: And Abraham said, I will swear."**

So you would have thought this covenant of  
non-aggression would have settled the  
matter once and for all.

But as soon as Abraham died, the Philistines began to stop up his wells.

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As Isaac moved further down the valley in order to avoid trouble, he must have faced a problem of insufficient water for his livestock.

V 17-19 **"And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.**

**18: And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.**

**19: And Isaac's servants digged in the**

**valley, and found there a well of springing water."**

It must have been a tremendous undertaking to reclaim these wells.

I would imagine that a well filled with earth and rock would take almost as much work to salvage as digging a new one.

But Isaac needed water, so not only did he dig **"again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father,"** but he dug a new one.

Verse 19 says--**"And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water."**

Well, he soon experienced a lot of opposition.

V 20-21 **"And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying,**

**The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.**

**21: And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah."**

Apparently, although the Philistines had allowed him to unstop his father's wells, they didn't think he had the same right that his father had to dig new ones.

Isaac named the first well Esek, which means contention, and the other Sitnah, which means hated.

So although Isaac was a man of peace and had not risked conflict, he did record their ill will forever.

V 22 **"And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they**

**strove not: and he called the name of  
it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the  
LORD hath made room for us, and we  
shall be fruitful in the land."**

Apparently he had moved far enough from  
their area that they were willing to  
leave him alone.

He could now live a life of peaceful co-  
existence in the land of compromise.

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Now, aside from these historical facts, is  
there a lesson here for us?

I think there is.

This colony of Philistines, who apparently  
resented Abraham's presence in the  
land, but who had not been strong  
enough to stand up and fight, had

nevertheless expressed their opposition by blocking up his wells after his death.

So following the same theme (I cannot call it a type) I think their actions have spiritual significant for us.

As we have noted, the presence of Philistines in the land is a picture of unregenerate man in control of God's heritage.

And when religious but unsaved individuals take control of a church or denomination, they invariably begin to *stop up the wells*.

As far as Abraham and Isaac were concerned, it had cost them a great deal to provide these wells in a dry and thirsty land.

True, they were essential for their own needs, but they also provided refreshment and even life itself for the other inhabitants of the land.

As we have already noted, Abraham was a type of our Heavenly Father during the Mount Moriah experience, and Isaac his son was a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So in a spiritual sense, the Father and the Son have, at great expense to themselves, provided *wells of life* and refreshment for mankind.

For instance, the poor lost sinner can be made a child of God simply by drinking at the well of salvation.

Oh, it is not the broken cistern of salvation by works hewn out by the efforts of man. No, it is salvation

through the blood of Christ, a fountain of life provided at tremendous cost. Then there is the second coming of Christ, a well of comfort for our weary souls. And, of course, there is the Word of God, from which the Holy Spirit draws out life-giving waters for our refreshment. And we could go on and on.

These are the *wells* that unregenerate man stops up until there is nothing left to give life.

And also they cry out, "***The water is ours.***"  
*The truth belongs to us alone.*

The Christian must not live by our man-made dogmas.

They don't drink from God's wells themselves, and they stop up the life-giving truth that others may not drink.



Church history tells this sad story over and over.

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So what should our response be to this attack?

Like Isaac, we should be busy contending for the faith.

We should be busy unstopping the wells of blessing that have been so graciously provided for mankind in a dry and thirsty land.

They have been put there at a great cost, and they have been put there for the salvation and refreshment of mankind.

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God had personally manifested Himself to Isaac and commanded him to **"Go not down into Egypt."**

But God's revelation hadn't been only a message of prohibition.

No, He had assured Isaac that He would marvellously provide for his needs.

**"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee."** And He had certainly done that.

But the years spent in Gerar had been difficult years.

How could they be anything else? Isaac had made a bad choice, and he had stuck with it.

Nevertheless, God kept His promise, and even provided for him a hundredfold, which, under the circumstances, was all He could do.

But God's material blessings had not given Isaac spiritual joy.

The best he could accomplish, and that after a great deal of grief, was to be left in peace.

V 22 **"For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."**

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During the years in Gerar Isaac had been busy about many things, but it appears that he had not had time, and possibly the desire, to build an altar.

But eventually prosperity and fruitfulness were not enough for him.

Finally Isaac realized that God's blessing and God's presence were two different things, and in Gerar, he could only have one.

Yes, it was time to move.

V 23-25 "And he went up from thence to  
Beersheba.

24: And the LORD appeared unto him the  
same night, and said, I am the God of  
Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am  
with thee, and will bless thee, and  
multiply thy seed for my servant  
Abraham's sake.

25: And he builded an altar there, and  
called upon the name of the LORD and  
pitched his tent there: and there  
Isaac's servants digged a well."

Isaac had gone back to Beersheba, his old  
home, and the home of his father  
Abraham.

Beersheba was the place where God had  
commanded Abraham to offer up his son  
on Mount Moriah.

Beersheba was the place where Abraham reached his highest point of faith. Yes, Isaac had gone back to Beersheba, and it wasn't long before he experienced the Lord's *presence*.

**"And the LORD appeared unto him the same night."**

And even before the Lord promised him a blessing, He promised Isaac *Himself*, and that's what he really needed.

**"I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee."**

Isaac had left the prosperity of Gerar behind, but he had also left the barrenness of Gerar behind.

He had gone back to "**Beersheba**" and found the Lord's presence and the Lord's blessing, but in that order: "**I am with thee, and will bless thee.**"

And not only was God *with* Isaac, but Isaac was *with* God.

V 25 **"And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there."**

Yes, he was back where he belonged, and immediately he dug another well to meet the needs of his increased livestock.

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As we have noted before, **"When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."**

Now that Isaac had left Gerar, Abimelech was getting a little worried.

It seems he couldn't get along *with* Isaac and he couldn't get along *without* him.

Oh, I don't think Abimelech really liked him that much, but Isaac was too powerful to ignore.

V 26-29 "Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

27: And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

28: And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

29: That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD."

Isaac wasn't very friendly when Abimelech arrived.

Perhaps He was remembering the irony of the whole situation.

This was the very place where the former Abimelech had made a solemn oath of peace with his father.

In fact, it was because of that very oath made many years ago that Abraham had called the place Beersheba, which means "The well of the oath."

And it was the Philistines' unfaithfulness in honouring this first covenant that had made so many problems for Isaac.

And now the second Abimelech comes boldly to "the well of the oath" and desires a second oath for his own protection.

So is it any wonder that Isaac was a little unfriendly?

However, this didn't seem to deter Abimelech.



He had a short memory when it suited him.

In fact, he even based his request for peace on his claim that **"we have done unto thee nothing but good."**

All this in spite of the fact that he had once said, **"Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we."**

And certainly Abimelech would be aware of the fact that his people's ill will had forced Isaac to move three times.

But Isaac wasn't a man to hold grudges, and I'm sure he realized that his past troubles had only worked together for his ultimate good.

So he agreed to make peace.

V 30-31 **"And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.**

**31: And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and**

**Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace."**

Having obtained what they really wanted, Abimelech and his men left.

They had said, "**We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee,**" but they had no interest in Isaac's God personally.

And Isaac was also quite content to let them go.

He knew their hearts well, and I think he was glad to see the last of them.

Yes, Isaac had started on the path of separation, and just like the Christian who finds his all in Christ, God opened up a new well of blessing for him.

V 32-33 "**And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have**

**found water.**

**33: And he called it Shebah: therefore  
the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto  
this day."**

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Isaac had taken a big and unnecessary  
detour, but that was all in the past.  
Now he was living a separated life, and  
enjoying sweet fellowship with the  
Lord.

Wouldn't this be a nice place to end the  
chapter?

But verse 33 does not end the chapter, and,  
unfortunately, a godly father does not  
guarantee a godly son.

V 34-35 **"And Esau was forty years old when  
he took to wife Judith the daughter of  
Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the  
daughter of Elon the Hittite:**

**35: Which were a grief of mind unto  
Isaac and to Rebekah."**

Abraham had made sure that his son didn't  
marry a Canaanite.

Apparently Isaac didn't have the same care  
for his sons.

Or possibly things went wrong during Isaac's  
absence in Gerar.

There is no mention of his sons while he was  
there.

Probably they had stayed behind to take care  
of Isaac's interests at home.

So it could have been during those years of  
family separation that Esau chose his  
life partner, or, more correctly, his  
life partners, with no regard for his  
parents' wishes.

In both cases he married Hittites.

And in both cases, they were **"a grief of  
mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah."**

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So here we have two sons growing up in the  
same home.

The younger became one of the Old Testament  
saints, although he was not always  
saintly.

The other broke his parents' hearts.

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Next week we will see a house divided.

Although Isaac was back in the place of  
God's blessing and the place of God's  
presence, he was still determined to  
ignore God's wishes in regards to his  
inheritance.

Rebekah and Jacob saw it coming, and chose  
the path deception in order to gain  
their own ends.

It was a move that would split the family  
and change the course of their lives  
forever.