

10197

ISAAC, WE BRETHREN, AS ISAAC WAS, ARE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

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Study #5: Sowing and reaping an hundred fold

Reading: Genesis 26

Thanks brother Stephen, and my beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ and our dear young people.

Tonight, we have what I think is an unique chapter in the scriptures. It is unique because it focuses primarily and almost exclusively upon Isaac himself, whereas in our session last evening, we saw that the record dealt with Isaac and Ishmael and Abraham, and Jacob and Esau and Rebekah, Genesis 26 focuses upon Isaac. To be sure, Rebekah is there incidentally, and Jacob and Esau are there, although, of course, Jacob is not mentioned and Esau gets a brief mention at the end of the chapter. But if you take it down to verse 33, it's almost as though the spotlight of scripture is beaming down upon Isaac. And there's a reason for that, b&s and young people, it's because this chapter constitutes an encapsulation of his entire life, not only for his own sake, but for us as well, who like him, are children of promise!

So, if we come to examine Genesis 26, we're going to see that we're actually looking at our own life in the truth, in a cameo form. Here are the kernel issues of what it's like to live the life of the truth for anyone who is so doing in the way that Yahweh would seek of us. We will be examining two major issues, they are interconnected, you might say, almost like cause and effect; and, those issues are working with divine providence for the building up of our faith and the molding of our character under trial. And the second theme, or strand to our study, will be as our title suggests, using the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 7, 'we will reap what we sow'. If we sow abundantly, we shall reap abundantly, whether that be to flesh or spirit; it's a very simple principle, but it's one that we've got to learn, we have to come to grips with the fact that it is our input that will determine our destiny! It is not in our strength that we'll come to light, but it is our determination as to what the outcome will be, that is the critical factor. God has and will continue to do all that He can possibly do, to ensure that we are in His kingdom. It is up to us to sow to the spirit; if we don't, then He can do nought else for us. So, there are the two principles that we're trying to exam this evening, (and, I hope that you'll forgive me for croaking through this talk, it seems that I've got to go away either overseas or come down here to get a cold, but I've had a cold this week, and so there may be some struggling going on here on the platform. We'll try and stay close to the microphones.).

Let's just see if we can get this chapter firmly in our minds as to its contents, both on a

ordinary level of just reading through it and saying, well, what are the contents? and then let's just focus on what that content means for you and me; and to do this I have two transparencies. (Now I recognize that some of you can't see the transparencies over here because I'm standing in the way, so I'll try and shuffle these up, but I want you just to get an idea of the content of Genesis 26). Here is the chapter broken up:

In verses 1 to 5 we have the promises repeated to Isaac in a time of trial; and we're going to see when we come to verse 1, that there is a real clue there as to the way that we should interpret this chapter.

In verses 6 to 11 we have Isaac making somewhat of an uncertain start in the land of the Philistines.

In verses 12 to 16 we have the fullness of divine blessing which creates envy amongst the Philistines.

In verses 17 to 22 we have patient endurance in the face of injustice and persecution.

And then we come to what is really a turning point in the chapter, in verses 23 to 25 we have the granting by Yahweh of the reward of the covenant (and we'll exam this a little closer in a moment, but you'll see, that there are in fact, two appearances by Yahweh in this chapter to Isaac, and they are at the opposite ends of his, if you might say, typical probation, that's a very important factor).

And then, finally in the 26 to 33rd verses of this chapter, we have the Philistines acknowledging the blessings of Isaac's God.

Now, if you were approaching this chapter, I guess that you'd summarize the chapter similarly and, you would say, 'that's good, because it's giving us a look at Isaac's life'. Now, what have we found out about this man thus far? Well, we've seen glimpses of him, and we saw those glimpses chosen deliberately by the Spirit, to give us some idea of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, there were things simply left out of the record. And when it came to weaknesses, we have yet to see, any real weaknesses in Isaac, haven't we? but tonight it changes, tonight we see this man as an ordinary man, if I might use that term, just like you and me, and his reactions to certain situations are just like yours and mine! And so, we're going to find that he's there in the record to represent us, and what happens in his life in this particular period is, in fact, an encapsulation of our entire probation in the truth and, in fact, our reward for that probation in the truth. And it's quite a remarkable reward that occurs towards the end of this chapter.

So then, let's just take those same chapter divisions of Genesis 26 and line up alongside of them what we think this is actually saying in allegorical or typical terms. And there's no doubt that it is! Here we have verses 1 to 5, the saints called to faithfulness to the covenant in the time of famine. So what we've done is, we've taken those first five verses concerning the way in which the promises were repeated to Isaac

in a time of trial and matched that, b&s and young people, with our own experience. The saint's call to manifest faithfulness towards the covenants in a time of famine, and if ever there were a time of spiritual famine we are living in it today, when the world is like a barren wilderness, where there is no water, and yet Yahweh is diligently digging in that barren ground to build up people who are containers of His Word, as we shall see in a moment.

When you come to verses 6 to 11 which, of course, spoke about Isaac's uncertain start in the land of the Philistines, we have here, in the allegory, the fledgling faith of the believers being tested and developed under trial.

In verses 12 to 16 which spoke of the fullness of divine blessing which creates envy from those round about we have, I believe, a demonstration of the principle of open confession, that is, of one's failings and one's need, and maturity of faith which is, of course, the product of trial, and it brings divine blessing and sometimes reactive persecution.

In verses 17 to 22, where we saw Isaac patiently enduring in the face of injustice and persecution, we are setting forth what is required in the life of saints; there needs to be patient endurance of affliction which bears fruit to the glory of God.

When we come to verses 23 to 25, we have the reward of the covenant granted at the judgment seat of Christ. And there are a couple of phrases that begin to make an impression upon your mind, if you read Genesis 26 very carefully. We'll bring those to the fore in a moment.

In verses 26 to 33 we have the Gentiles finally acknowledging the God of Israel and coming to the well of the oath. And we're going to see that it takes us back to Genesis 21 and 22.

Now, this is a remarkable chapter and it begins in a remarkable way! Have a look at verse 1, 'And there was a famine in the land', well, it could have stopped there couldn't it? Famines came along every now and then, but it adds some words, ever wondered why it adds these words? 'beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham'. So, in other words, the Spirit is saying that we ought to be going back to the first famine to find out what the issues of that were, so that we can match the experience of Abraham with the experience forthcoming of Isaac. And when you go back, it is incredible that you find that the experience of Abraham is almost like a model for that of Isaac, except in one particular, and even that might not have been so, if God had not intervened. A famine strikes the land 'and Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar'. Now, of course, we know in the life of Abraham that he landed up in the land of the Philistines and had dealings with an Abimelech. That was in Genesis 21, but the famine referred to is back in Genesis chapter 12, and we just need to go back there for a second, because here in Genesis 12 having had the second promise made to him, Abraham makes a serious mistake. Verse 10 says, 'And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was grievous in the

land'. The Canaanites didn't go down to Egypt and they survived quite nicely in the land of Canaan, but Abram felt compelled to go to Egypt to find better pasture for his flocks and so on; it was a mistake! And when he got there, he felt fear! His wife, Sarai (as she was then known), a beautiful woman, would obviously become a target for the men of Egypt, and they had agreed together that a half truth, which is essentially an untruth, would be told instead of saying she was his wife. She was to say, 'I am his sister', and that's also what he would say of her, 'she is my sister'. And we know the circumstances, she was taken into Pharaoh's house and she and he escaped with the skin of their teeth. Oh, yes, to be sure, they came away much more wealthy for the experience, but sorely chastened to boot! Abraham left Egypt in shame because the truth had been shamed, and in my experience, b&s and young people, there is nothing more telling than knowing that you've actually put the truth to shame by your behaviour. And I don't know if there's much more serious a sin than that! As Yahweh often pointed out to His people, and as Moses often pointed out to Yahweh, if He destroyed Israel then the nations would look upon Yahweh as though He was deficient! that He couldn't save them, and He was constantly warning Israel, 'beware that ye do not bring shame upon My Name'. And sometimes we do that as Abraham did on this occasion; he left Egypt in shame!

And when you come back to Genesis 26, we've now got the second famine in the Land, and Isaac responds to that famine by going south, perhaps firstly west, but his intention was to go south. He goes to Abimelech king of the Philistines, unto Gerar, a word which means 'rolling country' (1642), and here there were rolling hills near the coastal plain and was on the route to Egypt, and here was a little bit more for his flocks than there was in the place where he was so-journeying, supposedly at the well Lahai-roi. And Yahweh 'appeared unto him, (in verse 2), and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of', and what follows is a reiteration of the promises that God made to Abraham. But the conditions are laid down first of all, the condition was, don't go into the land of Egypt, dwell in the land that I shall tell thee of. And, of course, that goes back to what Abraham said to his servant, 'don't you dare take Isaac my son out of this land'. And God now is emphasizing that same principle again personally to Isaac.

And then comes in verses 3 and 4 the promise that God made to him, and as I said, it is a reiteration of the promises made to Abraham, and there is, in fact, 7 clauses in that promise, let's just see if we can pick them up. We read in verse 3, 'Sojourn in this land' (and that's being, of course, the final condition), #1., 'and I will be with thee', #2., 'and will bless thee', #3., 'for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries', #4., 'and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father', #5., 'And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven', #6., 'and will give unto thy seed all these countries', and then the final, the #7th clause, 'and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'. Now you will see that they are a collage of the promises that God made to Abraham throughout his life. So what God is doing is repeating the purpose that He went through with Abraham. Do you see why it's so important to understand in verse 1, that God wants our minds to be back there in the early experience of Abraham? because the experience of Isaac is going to mirror Abraham's experience, and here is Isaac being portrayed now, not so much as a type of the Son of God, but

rather, a type of all those who like us are children of promise. And that's, of course, exactly what's being done for us; we have been told that once we come into the truth, we must never go back to Egypt. If you want to reach the destiny for which you've been called, the possession of that land, in fact, the possession of the whole world, there's a primary factor, you must never go back to your old way. The old way has been left behind, you cannot and you must not return to it; that's the principle that Yahweh is drumming home to Isaac. 'Go not down to Egypt', and it is down to go into Egypt. 'Dwell thee in the land that I shall tell thee of', the word 'dwell' there in verse 2, 'shakan' (7931) means 'to lodge or to stay permanently', in fact, it's the root of the word 'shekinah', 'the dwelling presence of Yahweh'. 'Sojourn in this land', the word is 'guwr' (1481), it means 'to turn aside and sojourn', so here Yahweh's laying down the principle and then He speaks the promises.

So, there are conditions attached to those promises, but when you come over to verse 24 it's different, 'And Yahweh appeared unto him the same night and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father'. You see, He's referring him back to what He's done in the earlier verses of this chapter. 'Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake'. There are no conditions attached to this second appearance and these promises that are made in verse 24. They are unconditional now, b&s and young people, Isaac has been brought to an end of a process, and we need to think about this for a while, because this is exactly what happened in the case of Abraham, who you will see is also referred to at the end of the promises made in verses 3 and 4 when we come to verse 5. In verse 5 we are told that God made these promises and He would make the same promises and fulfill them to Isaac because 'that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge (or watch or duty, as the word means), my commandments, my statutes, and my laws'; and, those of you who are counting will have counted in verse 5, 5 things which Abraham kept: he kept Yahweh's charge, commandments, statutes, laws and he obeyed His voice, 5 things! So, Yahweh manifested unto him grace, and He's going through the same process with Isaac. And do you know what, b&s, He's been going through the same process with every son of Abraham, from that time to this; and we're all in the same position as Isaac identically, but it's a process that requires a life of faithfulness under trial in order to come to verse 24 and to receive the promise with no conditions attached. And we need to underline this fact, we need to come to Hebrews chapter 6.

Let's have a look at what Paul says concerning Abraham and the promises made to him. Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 12, 'That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises'. That's your context, there's a process, isn't there? a process whereby diligence must be shown, that through the development of faith and endurance under trial, we might inherit the promises; and then he says in verse 13, 'For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swear by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee'. Those words, of course, are drawn from Genesis 22, and they're drawn from there because that's the place where God made the promises to Abraham unconditional, 'Because you have not withheld thy son, thine only one from Me, I will not withhold My Son from you'. The promises I have made to you, Abraham,

will come to pass, they are absolutely certain as far as you are concerned, you're going to be in the kingdom; and, he was 130 odd years of age or whatever he was at the time. I've got you where I wanted you, Abraham, I've worked on you, My providence has overshadowed your life, I've put you in circumstances where you've been tested under trial and now you've made the supreme sacrifice, and I can make the promises unconditional! See the point Paul makes in verse 15, 'And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promises', he had got the promises back in Genesis 12, when he was 75 years of age, but it wasn't until Genesis 22, when he was about 130 or so, it wasn't until then that he obtained the promises. And there's a difference, isn't there? And that's the process which you and I have to go through, it's not just a matter of believing the promises, b&s and young people, it's a matter of living them, living them on a daily basis, and keeping as Abraham did the charge and the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, and obeying the voice of Yahweh under trial, looking for the hand of our God in our life, and working and co-operating with Him, whatever the difficulties might be until we obtain the promises. In other words, when God brings us to that point in life where He can be confident, that having been tested over and over again, we will never turn! And, of course, it will only become obvious to us if we have obtained the promises at the judgment seat. It's not likely that God is going to speak to us as He did to Abraham and to Isaac saying, 'in blessing surely I will bless you', but we can have the confidence, if we've got through the process, it shall be so unto us as well! So, we're talking about our whole life in the truth! So, the focus is different tonight, it's not on the 15 year olds, it's on those who might make a commitment in their teenage years, who have got to keep that commitment up until the end of their probation. And we're all sitting in different places on the scale, which leads to the obtaining of the promises; but the trials are going to be the same!

So, let's come back and look at what happened to Isaac in Genesis 26. I hope by now we've got some idea of the structure of this chapter and of it's obvious intent and, therefore, some idea why all of a sudden, out of the blue, the divine spotlight is focusing on one period of Isaac's life, when it's told us virtually nothing about him up until now. It's just homing in on this man's life at this particular juncture in a time of famine. He was forced to move from where he was, compelled by circumstances which had been divinely provided, no doubt, and he comes in verse 6 of Genesis 26, to dwell at Gerar; the word is 'yashab', 'dwelt', means to 'sit down and remain' (3427); he can't go any further because the way to Egypt has been shut off. 'And the 'enosh' (the weak mortal men) of the place asked him of his wife' and, you see these Philistine drifters, (Philistines, their name means 'to roll in the dust'), can you see them, sort of sitting there at the gate of the city, just watching the passers by. (I don't know what it is, I guess even I'm fascinated by the passers by at times, but there's something in human nature isn't there? that just likes to sit or to stand and watch passers by. And human nature being what it is, it is always more attracted to the female than to the male, although there were some interesting species of males around at the moment as well, who sometimes look like females. That's what human nature's like.

Can you see them watching the passers by, and then they see Rebekah! Oh, yes, she might be a woman now, who in our day would be sort of late 30's or early 40's, but still

extremely attractive, with a regal bearing! And Isaac sees the men of the Philistines looking at his wife, and he's struck with fear! These weak mortal men who have no scruples, no morality, who were Philistines, uncircumcised Philistines, and he said, 'she's my sister, for he feared to say she's my wife, lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon'. Proverbs 29 verse 25 says 'that the fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in Yahweh, shall be safe'. Now it's alright for us to stand here, of course, and criticize Isaac for not being bold enough to come out in the open, but b&s and young people, let's just bring this down to the modern day; let's come down to the Christadelphian of today, whether they be young or old, going through changes of circumstances in life, that may well be as there were in this case, the divine hand working in their affairs, making a new start somewhere, where you haven't been before perhaps. It might be from school out to work, that's quite a big jump in the life of people, been through that twice in the last 12 months at home; it's a big jump. Changing jobs, brethren, changing homes or even going into state, into totally new circumstances, you have to meet new people that don't know you. How many of us here in this hall tonight can say with all honesty in our hearts, that when we go into new circumstances we are not sensitive about what other people think of us, and we're not fearful of stating who we are, and being absolutely up front and truthful in our dealings with those new people with whom we have to do? How many of us can say, we go and stand on our principles without, of course, being nasty or ugly because there's no point in that; but we stand upon our principles when it comes time to test them? There are very few jobs into which you can enter today that will not have some elements of social interaction in them. Now, you might become, I don't know, you might work on the railroad lines somewhere out in 'Whopwhop' where you don't see anyone, but even there you'll find the same thing. It is simply, of course, a fact of life today that men enjoy entertainment! Men, (I use in the generic sense of men and women), entertainment, having a good time, seems to be part of my workday life; for instance, just this past Christmas time, and where I work they had a Christmas party for the particular branch for which I work in the Queensland government (at least I go there, I'm not sure I work). Since I've been there, I would have been approached on 20 or 30 occasions to buy raffle tickets; I am sick to death of saying, I have never bought a raffle ticket in my life, and I'm not going to start now. They look at me and say, 'you've been around awhile', and when it came time for the invitation to go out for the Christmas party, enormous pressure was placed upon me; 'Jim, we want you to come, you'll be the life of the party!' oh, yeah! can you imagine it? I'm going to go down to a park and put up a volleyball net, I'm not quite sure how they saw the ball, but anyway, but after the 6-packs had been consumed they're going to have a great time. Ah, look, we know that you're religious and that sort of thing, but we'll take cognizance of that; oh, yeah! I said to them what I said about raffle tickets: I have never been to a work Christmas party, or any other social gathering at work that I can think of anyway where I didn't have to be by boss's orders; I have never been to one, and I'm not going to this one. I'll stay back and hold the fort, put your phones through to me and I'll answer all calls. I can do that now, young people, I didn't find it quite so easy when I started my first job.

How many of us can say that we're bold enough, that we are deeply convicted enough, to make a stand up front first time, with absolutely new people who know nothing about

us? When I was a young person it was important to me what people thought about me; you know, you look in the mirror all the time,(I've got daughters on the way to the railway station, sit in the car and fix themselves up; I was just as bad but I didn't use powder, but anyway, I was just as bad), it really concerned me what people thought about me! It was important to me that people thought well of me, especially in the truth, but also outside. You see, the problem there is 'Number One', isn't it? As I said in a previous session, it's only when God looms so large in our life, that we are totally irrelevant and unimportant in the scheme of thing, that He is the only thing that counts, it's only then that we can get the perspective right; and, that's easy said, it's not so easily done! And if a great man like Isaac could wrestle with this problem of fear for his own personal safety, but you can see the principle involved, can't you? you can see that what should have been done here is for this man to have been absolutely truthful, believing what God had promised him!

And what had God promised him? have a look back at verse 3, 'Sojourn in this land (right where you are now) and I WILL BE WITH THEE'. Is that just words? or is it a promise? 'AND I WILL BLESS THEE'. Now, he forgets that, he forgets that Yahweh had made the promise that 'I will be with thee' and, so, for a time the blessing is also withheld; and, moreover, he's made a serious mistake, he's actually told an untruth! Rebekah was his cousin, so I guess by the elastic band method, you could say, well, 'she is my sister'! But you see, it's a lie, isn't it? and Christadelphians don't tell lies, they are truthful people, you don't hear lies from Christadelphians; they've come to be like God, He can't tell lies! A lie is so far from God that He simply can't entertain the thought of telling an untruth. And a Christadelphian who is called to be like his Father and to dwell in His presence, doesn't tell lies! does he? Isaac does! and he's uncomfortable with it, really uncomfortable and Yahweh withholds the blessing!

'It came to pass, (verse 8), that when he had been there a long time': We don't know how long it was, but the time came for the mask to be taken off You know, it's one thing that has come to be deeply impressed upon me in recent times, and my wife keeps on saying this, it's almost like a broken record, but she keeps on saying it, and she's dead right! absolutely right, give it time and the truth will out, what people really are will be manifested. You only can go on for so long living a lie, and every now and then it becomes obvious that someone has been living a lie. And it came a day when Abimelech was going about his business in his palace and he came to a window and he looked out and he went 'dong!' and he saw Isaac sporting with his wife Rebekah, as it says in verse 8, 'and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife'. The word 'sporting' here is 'tsachaq' (6711) and its cognate with the name 'Isaac', it means 'to laugh outright or to sport'. It's used, for instance, of Joseph in the business of Potiphar's wife; you remember, Genesis 39 verses 14 and 17, she said, 'you brought in a Hebrew to mock me'. And she had in mind, of course, the sporting of immorality, but it's not used that way here, nor is it suggesting that Isaac and Rebekah were conducting themselves as husband and wife in the open; what it does mean is that there was some cuddling going on, the kind of activity that you sometimes see in people who are married, and sometimes in those who are not. I don't know if there's anything wrong in that but, of course, Isaac and Rebekah had been married now for some considerable

time, in fact, we are told at the end of the chapter that Esau was 40 years old when he took Judith, the daughter of Beerli, the Hittite to wife, so if you add 40 to 20, which was the length of time that they'd been married before he was born, they had been married for nigh on 60 years, and there was a tenderness in their relationship which Isaac couldn't conceal. I mean, he didn't deliberately go outside the tent, and say, 'look, come on Rebekah, come out here, and then give her a big bear hug right in the pathway of the sight of Abimelech; he didn't do that, but they couldn't help themselves, they were outside the tent on one occasion and being a loving couple there was some kind of cuddling and the kind of activity, as I said, that you see! Mind you, we don't need to encourage that amongst some of our young people, there's a tendency to be like Siamese twins when you're young, and even that, in its place and carefully measured, is not something that we would necessarily discourage. Sometimes though, b&s, if I may say it, sometimes after 60 years of marriage some people don't behave like that! Some of the saddest things that I've seen have been marriages of some length, where all and I mean 'all' of the tenderness, all of the love and sensitivity for the feelings and emotions of the other party, have disappeared; and to encourage our young people who are serious about finding a partner, that when they do so, to determine in their mind, that the foundations of that relationship are going to remain strong. And we talked about those foundations in a previous study, and to work on that diligently so that when we get to this stage of life, there's that same kind of love and tenderness and feeling that Isaac and Rebekah experienced in their marriage, which wasn't without its problems, as we shall see, God willing on Monday evening.

But anyway, the game was up, verse 9, 'And Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her'. Now you put yourself in his position, you would feel that high, wouldn't you? about that high! Here is a man, a spiritual man, who by now is well known to be a Christadelphian! He didn't make that stand up front, it sort of came in bits; ah, I didn't realize, I see, you go to bible school, is that right? That's why you want your holidays? Okay! Little by little, Abimelech and others had come to know that he was indeed a Christadelphian, and now it's discovered that he's also a liar! There are circumstances in my life which I will never ever forget; much water has gone under the bridge, there are many things that one does for which one is sorry, and they are forgotten largely, because a new start is made, but I remember the times when I let my God down in the sight of the Gentiles! And I call them that, not in the sense of despising them, but that's what they are and we were amongst them once, we're no longer Gentiles in the flesh. We are the Israel of God, we brethren like Isaac was, are children of promise, and we have to be different. But when the Gentiles can stand there in indignation and seeming purity and say, 'well, you know, some of the people might have tried to take your wife and have lain with her, (and the Philistines would never do that!), but you told a lie!' You feel that high! those situations in my life are etched on my brain; do you know why? because there's never any hope, at least probably not, there is never any hope that the people who saw that will ever come to the truth, and they won't come to the truth because of what I did!

'And Abimelech charged all his people', verse 11, saying, 'He that toucheth this man

('ish', in contrast to the 'enosh' of verse 7), 'he that toucheth this mighty man or his wife shall surely be put to death'. Now we just need to go back to verse 9, the end of that verse, you can imagine the feelings of Isaac in this situation, so what does he do? does he defend himself and say, 'well, listen, I was a bit scared and I did tell you a half truth, she is my cousin and I thought I was justified in doing that, Abimelech, I didn't think it would really do any harm'? He didn't go through all the justifications, b&s and young people, he didn't try and make the sin any better than what it really was, he simply came out and said to Abimelech, 'I've made a mistake, I was afraid, and I didn't believe the promises that God made to me. He said to me, sojourn in this land and I will be with thee, and I didn't believe it.' And when he did that, b&s and young people, Yahweh responded. See what it says in verse 12, the first word of that verse is very important. THEN, then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year, in the same year; it's a famine, b&s and young people, but in the same year after years of famine, he receives a hundredfold. Now that word 'hundredfold', in fact, is two Hebrew words (3967 + 8180) 'meah + shaar', means a hundred measures, the root of 'shaar' means to 'act as a gate keeper'; it's almost as though Yahweh opened the flood gates. He opened the gates and it poured forth, an enormous harvest. And all the Philistines were aghast and said, 'look at that!', but you see, there was a distinct change, wasn't there? Well, the change was this, now Isaac had been humbled, he had acknowledged his fault, he had put the matter right, he had come out into the open and confessed who he was, and why he was like that. And God said (and I'm paraphrasing it for you) 'it would have been easier if you could have got it right up front; if you had listened to what I said to you, that I would be with you; but you're there as a type of many others, and they're sure to go through the same process, they're sure to make the same mistake, and all I want them to do is to learn from you, Isaac, and to pick up the pieces and make a new start and if you're humble about it and not like those who will justify themselves till the cows come home, because they're always right; if you're not like that, then I will give you a blessing. And it's remarkable, b&s and young people, that God does that, He will give a blessing!

And it says in verse 12, 'And Yahweh blessed him' (and that's a reference back to verse 3), 'Sojourn in this land and I will be with thee', he, of course, realizes that now, 'and will bless thee'. So, there's your fulfillment, a hundred fold. You reap what you sow: you sow to the Spirit, you shall reap of the Spirit life; you sow lies, you will reap shame. Now I guess there are some people here who probably think I'm being a bit tough on Isaac, (eh, is there?); well, I'm not, because, b&s, if we're honest with ourselves, we're all the same! Oh, yes, it might be in different degrees, but we're all the same, and it's only those people who have some kind of confidence in themselves that might think we're being a bit tough on this man, those who know flesh for what it is, know full well that that's how it behaves. But it doesn't have to stay that way, does it? We can learn!

And so, verse 13 says, 'And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great'. Now, those words in the Hebrew, you can look them up, quite interesting words. The word 'waxed' (3822) has the idea of 'twisting to be large', like a tree growing up towards the heavens. He became great 'and went forward': now the word 'went' is 'yalak' (3212) and the word 'forward' is 'halak' (1980), and they mean the same thing in the Hebrew, they mean 'to walk', they're cognate words, in fact. So he

walked and he walked, or as the margin says, 'he went going'. There was progress in this man's life and they all saw it, and he became very great, he went going on! Verse 14, 'For he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him'. And what did they do? 'For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines (the rollers in the dust) had stopped them, and filled them with earth'; and, that word 'earth' there is the Hebrew word 'aphar' (6083), it's the word for 'dust', and the first occurrence in the bible is in Genesis 2 verse 7, 'That Yahweh took the dust of the earth and from that He made man' (He made 'adam'). So, the Philistines, the rollers in the dust, were going along out of envy for what God was doing for Isaac, they were going along and they were actually putting dirt back into the wells that Isaac's servants were digging.

Now this is a very important principle! Now you might remember a few sessions ago, and if you don't, I want to take you back to Isaiah 51. Isaiah 51 and verse ,1 we read this (don't loss your place in Genesis 26, we won't be here long), 'Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Yahweh. Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you', and so on. So, what we're told in verse 1 is that, the process of God calling children for Abraham is a process actually of digging in the earth and in the rock to build a well! 'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged'; now, it's pretty hard, I guess, for us to immediately wrap our minds around that, but when you start putting the scriptures together it becomes powerfully obvious that is a way in which God has illustrated the process of calling people to the truth and working in their lives. Even the Lord said that the mind is like soil, sometimes it's rock hard; there are rocks there which prevent growth! Well, that same principle is used in relation to digging of wells. We read in the Psalms, for instance, in Psalm 40 verse 6, 'my ear hast Thou (digged) opened (3738)', (that's the words of our Lord Jesus Christ), that word 'opened' means 'to dig a well'. In John chapter 4, of the woman of Samaria, she came to a well which was a hole dug in the ground, and the Lord said to her, 'you've got a hole in the ground on your shoulder'. There was an earthen made jar with a hole in it and had no water, and she came to a well which was full of water; and the Lord said, 'I can give you water that you know nothing about', and a process of digging was begun, and she left her water pot behind and went back into the city because now the ear was being digged, and Yahweh's Words (the water of the Word) was, as it were, entering in, and finding lodgment in a new well, or a new character, that was being developed by faith.

So, the process of digging wells is actually creating members of the family of Abraham, by belief in the promises, and they are there to be containers of the water of God's Word. Sometimes the soil is pretty hard to get through, and this is a time of famine, and Isaac's servants have been going out there and have been slaving away, and they were using various instruments. If you're going to dig a well you need a shovel, you need a pick, you need perhaps a crowbar, you need all sorts of implements. The main implement is the shovel, and a shovel, of course, here represents perhaps the Word of our God which is able to chip away and to remove dirt and dust and earth. So, along comes a brother, one of the members of the family of Isaac, and he's got another

instrument in his hand, this is a pick maybe, it might be a pick named 'Elpis Israel', because you can really start digging around when you get into a book like that! Another comes along and says, 'let me have a go!' and he has an instrument in his hands which might be called for those who are getting down to the deeper things, 'Eureka', or any other of the writings of the truth which provide us with expositions of the Word of our God. So, here are all these brethren, they're digging away and they're digging into ears, and people are beginning to absorb principles, and they are being filled up with the water of the Word.

But what are the Philistines doing, b&s and young people? Well, as hard as Yahweh's servants are digging the wells of water, the Philistines are coming along with their shovels and filling up those wells with dirt. And what sorts of implements do they use, can you see them, can you get a picture in your mind? Isaac's servants are there and they labour day after day after day and they've got a well and there's water at the bottom of it. And when they're out of sight, even when they're not out of sight as we shall see in a moment, they are shooed away and the Philistines are out with their shovels and they go like this, 'ah huh, we'll fix them!' and what sort of shovels do they use? Well, let's bring this down to modern times, you'll see one Philistine there, he's got a shovel that looks like a magazine, and it's open and the predominant colour is the colour of flesh, or some other gaudy colours worn by flesh. It's a very harmless magazine, after all it's called Woman's Day; have you ever seen the cover of the current Woman's Day? I happened to see it in the shopping centre, what are they going to put on the cover next? I mean, if they go any further we'll all have to wear blinkers, b&s, that's Woman's Day; what about the other garbage that you see in service stations, which is very attractive to the flesh of man and excites it? What about that sort of garbage? it's a very effective shovel, I can tell you, and you'll see the Philistines, they're working overtime and away they go, and they're filling up the wells that Yahweh's been digging with His Word. Oh, here comes another one, look at him, a Philistine! and he's got a shovel that looks like a square! what's he going to do with that? and it's got an eye and it looks grey! Oh, look, it's got pictures on it, and you can sit and watch him work all day! You can watch any sort of soap opera that you like, and if you stay up late enough who knows what you might be able to see? Oh, hang on, here's another one coming! look at him, he's really coming post haste, he's got a shovel but it looks like a VCR, he's got a pile of videos in his hand. Now as an instrument, as an instrument it may, I say may, it may have occasionally an appropriate use. May! but this world, b&s and young people, predominately uses it otherwise; there are many Philistines out there, and they've got all sorts of shovels. I've seen some shovels that have buttons on them, and it goes 'bing!!!!', and it goes 'brooom, broooooom, broooooom', and you hear them going down the street, and you can almost see the car go the same way, we haven't got past the Wilston hall and we have a Sunday School class and you simply cannot talk, we just sit there looking at each other as the car goes past, and you can almost see the ears of the brethren going 'brooom, brooom broom!' Very interesting shovel that one! It also pushes quite a bit of dirt. And I can go on, but you don't want me to go on, do you? There's a lot of dirt pushers out there, and they're doing a pretty good job of filling up the wells that Isaac's servants have digged.

Verse 16, 'And there came the day when Abimelech said to Isaac, Go from us, for thou

art much mightier than we'. The word 'mightier' (6105) has the idea of meaning 'powerful or numerous', in fact, it can even mean to crunch the bones, in Jeremiah 50 verse 17, it's translated 'brake the bones', in other words, he came to the impression eventually, that if Isaac remained nearby with the blessings of Yahweh upon him, that they would come to blows, as it were. And so he said, 'look, you better go'. Verse 17, 'And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had 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 his father had called them'. So, he began the process all over again. He went back to those places and he said, 'well I know, it's sort of like a roundabout, but we've got to make an new start.' B&S and young people, I know some, not necessarily here (I don't know too much about here, but I know some elsewhere), that have got themselves in serious trouble by association with dirt pushers; and, they are finding it very difficult to make a new start, but you've got to make a new start!

Isaac made a new start, he went back and he began to make a new start for others; he got his servants digging again, he got them as it were, digging into the Word, using the implements which can dig wells that will hold water. 'They digged in the valley', verse 19, 'and found there a well of springing water'; the word 'springing' is 'chay' (2416), it means 'living', reminds us of the living water of John chapter 4 verse 14 which the Lord Jesus Christ drew to the attention of the woman of Samaria. Living water, the water of the Spirit, 'and the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek'. They don't give up easily, do they, these Philistines? They will not give up easily and, so, Isaac finds that he's pushed away from those wells because they strive with him, and he calls it Esek, 'contention' (6320). 'And they digged another well and strove for that also; and he called the name of it 'Sitnah' 'hatred' (7856). They hated him and 'he removed from thence and he digged another well' (and he was far enough away this time) 'and they strove not and they called the name of it, Rehoboth, 'rue' (7344). That's exactly the process, b&s, which all believers, in one form or another, have to go through. Can you recall the words of the apostle Peter? Let's have a quick look at them in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 7, 'Casting all your care upon Him: for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the diabolos (or should I say, 'your opponent at law' as it is in the record) as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world'. See what he's saying? He's saying, brethren, don't get the idea that this is only happening to you, the same afflictions are being accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. It's always been so! You've got to be very vigilant because they are roaming about seeking whom they may devour; they want to fill up the wells with dirt! Look what he says in verse 10, 'But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you (complete), stablish, strengthen, settle you'. You see, there is an end to the process, b&s and young people, and God works to that end. He's done it in every generation, He's doing it today, it's just that our trials might be a bit different to those to whom Peter wrote, but the principles are the

same and the end is the same; it's just a question whether or not we can see it, and whether we are prepared to co-operate with the Father.

So, when we go back to Genesis 26 we read, 'For now Yahweh hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba'. Do you remember much earlier in this session this evening, I said there was a phrase which seemed to repeat itself in one form or another in this chapter. I want to point that out to you now. Did you notice in verse 12 that it said, 'then Isaac sowed in that land and received in the same year', well, have a look at verse 24, 'And Yahweh appeared unto him, the same night', have a look at verse 32, 'and it came to pass the same day', so what's that there for? Well, try and get a picture in your mind, he's been down in the land of the Philistines for some time, he's gone through all these trials and tribulations, he's been battling with dirt pushers, he's had to move from place to place, it's been uncomfortable; and there comes a time when Yahweh gives him rest and he decides to go up from thence about 20 miles or whatever that is, 30 or so kilometers, to Beer-sheba, 'the well of the seven', the well of the oath, where did we first meet that?

Isn't that Genesis 21 and the chapter which deals with the covenant made with the Gentiles? Isn't that the place from whence Abraham came with Isaac to offer him up upon Moriah? Isn't that the place to which Abraham and Isaac and the two young men (representing Jew and Gentile) returned? Isn't that the place where Abraham received the news about his family in foreign lands who had 12 sons? It's a very significant place! This is the place, b&s, that speaks about the reward at the end of probation. And as Isaac arrives there after a weary journey, you can see him come, can't you? with his whole company, and he's out there banging tent pegs, and all he wants to do is go to bed. And the same night Yahweh appeared and said, 'I'm the God of Abraham, thy father'; I've taken you through the same process that I took Abraham through, and like him, finally, although you've made some mistakes, you've learnt by them and you obeyed my voice and you kept my charge and my commandments and my statutes and my laws; fear not, for I am with thee (and you know that now), and will bless thee and I will continue to do it, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake' No conditions now, because this is the end of the process, and Isaac acknowledges, and he builds an altar there and calls upon the name of Yahweh, and this, of course, is a reference back to Genesis 12 verses 7 and 8, which is exactly what Abraham did when he came to Beth-el. He pitched his tent there and there Isaac's servants dugged a well'. Did you know that up till Genesis 25 verse 34, the word for 'well', which in the Hebrew is the word 'beer' (875), (and has nothing to do with that substance people drink), only occurs 8 times, but in Genesis 26 the word 'beer' or 'well' occurs 8 times.

Now that's interesting, isn't it? because 8 happens to be the number of immortality and Isaac has come back to the well where Abraham, acting on behalf of God, made a covenant with the Gentiles. Look what happens here! This is about coming to the end of the process, b&s and young people, this is all about completing our probation and receiving the blessings of the reward, receiving the promises. Well, there was a covenant made with Gentiles, and this is in the kingdom age, 'Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army';

so, there are three men here; there is royalty, there is his political adviser (or you might say democratically elected governments in today's terms), and there is his military people. So, they're all there, they're the people that count in modern society, royalty, governments, armies; 'And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you'. So, he parries them, and they said, (and look what they said), 'we saw' (look at the Hebrew in the margin, 'seeing we saw', because twice the word 'raah' is used), 'I've been watching!' but now they weren't just casual observers of men passing by, now they'd seen something remarkable, for it says, 'we saw certainly that Yahweh was with thee (that's a reference back to verse 3 and verse 24), And we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good (which is not true) and have sent thee away in peace (which was not true, but he doesn't pick them up on it, he just looks at them, because they'd acknowledged something very important; see what they say at the end of that verse), 'thou art now the blessed of Yahweh'. That's a reference back to verse 3 and verse 24. 'And he made them a feast and they did eat and drink (there was fellowship) and they rose up betimes in the morning, and swear one to another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and they said unto him, WE have found water!'

Yes, b&s and young people, when the day comes, we're going to find an abundance of water, we just have got to have the well in which it can reside. There's got to be a bit of digging done, there's got to be an effort to make sure that the tools that are used on our mind are effective in digging; that they're not the kind of tools which the Philistines used to fill things up with dirt. 'And he called it 'Shebah' therefore, the name of the city is called Beer-sheba unto this day'. You notice it says, the name of the city is Beer-sheba; there was already a well called Beer-sheba, but now, b&s and young people, there is a city! Does that ring any bells, Hebrews chapter 11, 'He hath prepared for them a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Does it take your mind forward to Revelation chapter 21 and the new Jerusalem, the city which comes down from God out of heaven. A city is not a collection or a conglomeration of buildings in the scripture; the city referred to here, b&s, in a typical sense is a corporation of people, it's the family of Abraham in glory! He called the name of the city 'the well of the seven', and when God began the process with Isaac, He just happened to have 7 clauses in the promise, and because Isaac responded like Abraham, he came to the end of the process, and Yahweh gave him an abundance of water. Isn't that remarkable?

But what does it all mean? Well, it means this, if God is truly at work in our life, if we can begin to appreciate that the circumstances of life that overtake us are often His hand at work, pushing us into new circumstances, new situations where we have the opportunity to stand up for what we believe, to declare who we are, to tell the truth, to give a good example that people might see that we are blessed of Yahweh, and that we are, in fact, reaping what we have sown! Let us hope, b&s, that our sowing and reaping, like Isaac's, will be an hundredfold!