

## 99-08-15a

Let's prepare ourselves for the study of the word of God this morning with a moment of prayer. Father, we thank you for the privilege of gathering together and studying your word in peace and without fear of reprisal or persecution. We thank you that we have not only the preservation of your word and copies of it to own for ourselves, but we have the benefit of great scholarship and vast resources so that perhaps in this age, as in no other, we have the opportunity to advance our knowledge and understanding of your word and your plan.

We pray as we worship together in the study of your word and allow us to let it do its work in our souls of transformation, of exposing the thoughts and intents of our hearts so that we can be more closely conformed to the image of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

Come with me for our scripture reading this morning to Psalm 37. The context in which we find ourselves in Genesis is the life of Isaac. If you think about Isaac, compared to his father, compared to his sons, he is perhaps the most passive of the patriarchs.

We remember Abraham when Lot and the other inhabitants of Sodom were taken captive by the confederation of kings that came down from the north. Abraham got together with his cohorts there in the area, the Hittites, and went up there and conducted a military campaign, overcame these conquerors, freed the captives, took vast amounts of plunder and booty, had a meeting with Melchizedek on the way back. But Abraham is pictured in many cases as a man of action.

He goes and does things and is quite active in a number of ways. Jacob, whose life we will soon be immersed in, who lends his name to the nation that comprises his descendants, is also quite the man of action. We're going to see that he moves and he does and he wrestles and he is quite active.

Isaac, when you think about him, he's there. Somebody else brings his life to him. He moves.

God speaks to him. But we've seen in this most recent set of episodes, in the long about chapter 25 and 26 there, that he is down in Gerar. He foists the deception that Rebekah is his sister on Abimelech and company.

Abimelech looks out the window. Even in the resolution of this error on Isaac's part, it's fairly passive. God doesn't intervene with plagues.

God doesn't appear to Abimelech in a vision the way he did Abimelech's father when Abraham tried this trick. Everything is more passive in Isaac's life. You just don't get the sense of momentum and action.

And yet we're going to see this morning that in some ways Isaac has taken a higher path. He is not passive when it comes to faith. But faith is much more difficult to document when you don't have the actions going on.

Abraham was a great man of faith. Jacob is going to be a great man of faith. But they are much more in the mold of the epistle of James, where I will show you my faith by my works.

But faith is not always manifested in works that people can see. And when we look more closely at Isaac's life, we're going to find that he is the equal of his father and his son in the area of faith. But not everyone is called to an active, overt, visible form of activity in which your faith is going to be made manifest.

And we are sometimes led to believe that because we're not out there on the front lines of faith, we're not a missionary, we're not a pastor, we're not a reader in a congregation, we're not in the forefront of some active ministry where lives are being impacted, but somehow we're deficient in the area of faith. And Isaac is a great example to us of the fact that it's not always the battle going to the strong and the race going to the swift where God is manifesting His glory in the arena of faith. Isaac is much more in the mold of what we generally call the meek, or those who function in humility.

When you think of Abraham, when you think of Jacob, humility is not the first thing that pops into your mind. Meekness, the willingness to yield in the face of adversity, to give place to another without a quarrel, without a battle, without a pitched conflict. And this gives us a balance to the activity that we've seen with Abraham and that we're going to see with Jacob.

If Isaac was in the mold of his father and in the mold of Jacob, we would miss this illustration and this lesson that there are other sides to life besides marching forth to rescue your captured nephew or marching out to make sure that you get the flocks and herds that belong to you and you get the blessing that belongs to you and you get the land and the possessions that you feel are coming to you. Isaac's role, in some ways people tend to gloss over Isaac because he is so passive. You kind of jump from Abraham to Jacob.

But God's Word devotes this space to the life of Isaac and documents these events in his life for a reason. So we don't want to miss because it isn't spectacular and it isn't real memorable. We don't want to miss the lesson of his life.

Psalms 37 is a reminder to us of how God views those who operate in humility, those who operate in meekness. And that's why it is our scripture reading this morning. It is a fairly long chapter but I want to read the whole thing and we want to maintain our attention and our focus looking specifically.

Just keep Isaac in mind as we review these principles that are in this song which was in the hymnal of Israel. You recall that there are five books in the hymnal that is composed of the 150 chapters. The first 50 chapters are book one in the Israelite hymnal and these hymns are pretty much all ascribed to David.

So what does that tell you about Psalm 37? David was both a great man of action and a man of great humility and Psalm 37 comes from his pen. Psalm 37, subtitled in our New King James, The Heritage of the Righteous and the Calamity of the Wicked, The Happy State of the Godly and the Short-Lived Prosperity of the Wicked. All of that is added in there for us by the editors of the New King James.

The Hebrew text simply says, A Psalm of David. And that of course is verse one. Any time you find these little notations at the beginning of a psalm that are obviously a part of the text, this is actually verse one in a Hebrew text and our verse one is verse two.

And it gets a little tricky when you're reading through scholarly references because you always have to check and see, well, are they using the Hebrew versification or the English? So verse one here in a Hebrew text simply says, A Psalm of David. Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. Remember the wells that Abraham had dug and that the Philistines had filled in with dirt? We saw last time that Isaac is out there re-digging his father's wells.

We also saw that as soon as he got one cleared out and available for use again, a well that his father had dug and that his father had named and that Isaac called by the names that his father called them, the Gerarites came out and got into contention, started arguing, saying, hey, this is our land and that's our well. And they took it and rather than fight over it, Isaac let them have it and he went and dug out another well. Same thing happened again.

So Isaac kept moving, rather than fight over the wells, rather than go into court and say, look, my father dug this well, my father named it, etc., etc., he yielded. Do not fret because of evildoers. Do not be envious of the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb.

Everything in their life is temporary. Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness.

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.

He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret because of Him who prospers in His way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Cease from anger and forsake wrath. That's the natural response, isn't it? You can

imagine, you think about these wells. I did a little research on wells in this part of the world.

Wells typically had to be chipped. You had to chip down through some rock to get to the water table. The minimum depth of some of these wells is about 20 feet.

Some of them go to a depth of 160 or 170 feet. The wells of that nature, you'd start out, and maybe the diameter that you chip through the rock might only be 6 to 8 feet. And if it was only 20 feet deep, that's fine.

You could let down a skin or a bucket or something and dip water. But if you had to go deeper, as you do in some of these arid regions, you had to widen the mouth because there's a point at which it's no longer practical to let something down. You need a pit-type well that we talked about when Rebecca and the servant of Abraham met at the well.

These pit-type wells, the mouth had to be broadened so that you could get down to a depth of 80, 90, 100, 120, even 150. Some of these wells, 170, 180 feet deep. And this is no small task.

And to dig a well of this nature and find water at any depth, this is a life-sustaining... It's not like you walk into the kitchen and hit the faucet handle and out comes the water. This is your life. Without water, you, your flocks and herds will die.

To go through this labor, to finally strike the water, to be happy, to have a celebration, have a big feast and drink from the water and name it, have a commemorative occasion, and then have somebody come in and start fighting with you over it and say, you're on our land and bless your heart for digging it, but this is our well. And to give it up and to go somewhere else and start the process all over again and have the same thing happen again. And to be willing to give up that well rather than fight over it and move further out and undig yet another well.

A well that had already been dug once by your father and that these miscreants have filled back in because they didn't want you to prosper. You've re-dug it and now they're running you out of it. You can see where anger, wrath, bitterness, contention, strife, a sense of self-righteousness would assert itself.

Psalms 37 says, look, put your trust in the Lord. Feed on His faithfulness. Don't think that you have to survive by the water that you find in the well.

It's the faithfulness of God that you need to be looking at. There is a time for everything under the sun. Go to Ecclesiastes.

There is a time for war and there is a time for peace. Isaac was wise enough in the Lord to know that this was not a time to fight over a well. It was a time to yield and to move

back.

And this is a great evidence of his faith because it's one thing to just roll over on your back and allow somebody to walk all over you like a doormat. This is not what Isaac is doing. Isaac is trusting in the promise of God.

God already promised him, I will give you this land. You and your descendants will possess it. You will dwell in it.

I will prosper you and make your name great. I will fulfill all the promises that I made to your father. Isaac yields these wells in faith.

He yields it because he's trusting in God. He's trusting in the promise that God personally delivered to him. He says, God has promised.

Maybe it's not now. Maybe it's not yet. But God, when the time is right, I'm not going to have to fight.

I'm not going to have to contend. I'm not going to have to argue and assert my own righteousness and my own right to these things. When the time is right, God will give it.

We think about this in the realm of human promotion. Whether it's in the military or in civilian life, you work hard, you do a good job, and you see others promoted ahead of you. You see others advance who you know, because of your observation, may not be worthy of the promotion and the advancement.

The temptation is there to go in and pound on the boss's desk, so to speak, and say, hey, what about me? What about the hard work I've done? Sometimes you do a lot of hard work and someone else takes the credit for it and gets promoted because of it. You think, how unfair. Just think of Isaac when these occasions come up and think of Isaac's response and go back to Psalm 37.

What does Psalm 37 say? Verse 7. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. When it's time for you to be promoted and God promotes you, that's a good permanent promotion. That's a promotion that's going to last.

If you depend on the vagaries of human opinion and human perception and human judgment, your promotion is just as uncertain as the people who make it, if you rely on those things. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Don't fret because of Him who prospers in His way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Cease from anger and forsake wrath. You lose the battle when you yield to anger and wrath. Do not fret.

It only causes harm. Just remember, verse 9. Evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall

be no more.

Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. When God gives you an inheritance, when God gives you a possession, not only do you have the possession, but you have the abundance and the peace to enjoy it.

And a possession or a promotion that is taken at the cost of strife and battle, you can bet that it is not going to be enjoyed in abundance and in peace in these situations. The wicked plots against the just and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that His day is coming.

The wicked have drawn their sword and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. What's the use of having a Maserati or a Porsche if your arms are broken? You can't drive it. You can't enjoy it.

The Lord knows the days of the upright and their inheritance shall be forever. That's a very powerful verse. The Lord knows the days of the upright.

What are the days of the upright? They're indefinite. They're infinite. Because the upright is going to dwell with God forever.

God knows that He doesn't necessarily have to give us all things right now. Because He's got us for eternity. He can bless us.

He can prosper us. He can give us our inheritance at some point down the road and we're still going to enjoy it for an infinitely long time. There are things that God can teach us before we arrive in abundance and prosperity and peace and possession.

And God can make good use of that time. He also knows the days of the wicked, that they are short. And if they possess, if they seem to be on top and enjoying and so forth, God knows that their days are going to be cut off.

And when we adopt that viewpoint, then it doesn't grate on our nerves. It isn't an abrasive, wrath-inducing thing to see that others seem to be prospering, seem to be promoted, seem to be possessing, and seem to be on top. When you step back and look at things from an eternal perspective, all you can do is feel sorry for someone who thinks they're on top, but it's for such a short, perishable time.

That's God's viewpoint. He knows the days of the upright. He knows their inheritance

shall be forever.

They shall not be ashamed in the evil time. And in the days of famine, they shall be satisfied. It doesn't say that they're going to prosper and inherit all things, but they'll be satisfied.

They will have enough. The upright, the righteous before God, their seed will not be begging bread. Verse 20, the wicked shall perish.

And the enemies of the Lord, like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away. Why do you want to envy someone who's going to go up in flames? Or go down in flames, depending on how you want to look at it.

Verse 21, the wicked borrows and does not repay. But the righteous shows mercy and gives. For those blessed by him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by him shall be cut off.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with his hand. I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.

This is David speaking. He is ever merciful and lends, and his descendants are blessed. Depart from evil and do good, and dwell forevermore.

For the Lord loves justice and does not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever.

You can think about episodes and events in the life of David, can't you? Where he could easily have gotten the wrong viewpoint, looking at Saul sitting on the throne of Israel after David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king. And here's Saul persecuting. He's living in the cave of Adullam, living from hand to mouth with his men, week after week, month after month, year after year, what has been promised to David he does not possess.

But God uses that time between the giving of the promise and the fulfilling of the promise to teach and to train and to prepare David for the fullness that will come when these things become his. And that's our situation. When we see people overtake and pass us in promotions or in possessions or in whatever it may be, just remember, this is our cave of Adullam.

This is our opportunity to learn, to grow. We're going to have possessions that transcend anything we can even imagine. And we're going to have it eternally.

Why should we carp and fret and get upset in this life at people who take hold of temporary, ephemeral, vaporous, go up in smoke type of things? But that's what we do, isn't it? We fret ourselves because we don't maintain our knowledge of who we are and why we're here. What is the Lord looking for in verse 28? Justice. He's looking for the sanctified, the saints, the set-apart ones.

Verse 30, the mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom and his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God is in his heart. None of his steps shall slide.

The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand nor condemn him when he is judged. It's very interesting.

It doesn't say the Lord will never allow his hand to touch him, does it? The hand of the wicked can take hold of the righteous, but the Lord's not going to leave you there. The Lord will not leave him in his hand nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord and keep his way and he shall exalt you to inherit the land.

This, I think, is the great victory in Isaac's life. Isaac waits on the Lord. Isaac doesn't try to reach out and seize things.

And this is a lesson that Jacob would have done well to learn from his father. And it's going to take him many years and many painful experiences before he gains the knowledge that Isaac apparently gained by meditation when he lived out there in Beelahairoi, the place, the well of the God who sees me named by Hagar of all people, another victim of injustice in some ways. Wait on the Lord and keep his way.

He shall exalt you to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. One of those foreshadowings of the resurrection.

I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more. Indeed, I sought him, but he could not be found.

You see this happen in daily life. There are companies that I've seen. There are situations I've seen.

There are people, and you think, boy, they've got everything wired together. They're on top of the world. What could possibly go wrong? Look at the foundation that they've got.

Look at the security. Look at the retirement plan they've got going. They're on top of this big company.

They're in this big firm. They've built it from the ground up. The thing is solid.

Look at all their clients. You see this happen with churches. You see a church, and you think, wow, they are hitting on all eight cylinders.

Look at the ministries. Look at the buildings. Look at the people.

Look at the tape and book ministry. Look at the expansion and the growth. I look around today, and I've got books on my shelf and tapes in my closet from places that are no more.

I have business cards from companies that were thriving and prosperous that I worked for that are no more. It doesn't matter how firm a foundation people think they have in this life. The only things that last and the only things that count are the things that God makes, that God gives, and that God promises.

Those are the only lasting possessions, the only lasting promises, the only lasting security are the things that are built on the promises of God. Therefore, verse 37, mark the blameless man and observe the upright, for the future of that man is peace. The transgressors shall be destroyed together.

The future of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation, the deliverance of the righteous is from the Lord. He is their strength in the time of trouble.

And the Lord shall help them and deliver them. He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them. Why? Because they trust in Him.

We have a choice between anger and fretting and frustration or trusting the Lord. To trust the Lord is to seize and lay hold of eternal things. To get our minds on earthly things and immediate circumstances is to put ourselves in the camp of the wicked and join those who will be cut off.

It's as simple as that. Isaac learns this lesson as we resume our study over in Genesis. Isaac at first does not seem to be a remarkable man, but he is heir to the promises that belong to those who are humble.

He is not a flawless man. We've seen his errors. We've seen his mistakes in trying to preserve himself, getting fearful and being afraid that he will be killed because of his beautiful wife.

But he learns. And it doesn't take divine intervention. It's just through circumstances.

God doesn't have to put a plague on the people like He does Abraham's experience down in Egypt. God doesn't have to go up here to Abimelech and talk to him in a vision the way He does when Abraham is in Gerar a generation previous. All it takes is a circumstance.

And Isaac is sharp enough to learn the lesson without a great divine intervention. And this in a way is an advance, an improvement over his father Abraham. God had to come in and really start throwing some weight around to break Abraham out of his failure and

out of his error.

God tells Isaac, don't go to Egypt. If you have a map in the back of your Bible, by the way, see if you've got a Palestine in the time of the patriarchs. Or any map of Israel.

You almost certainly have at least one back there that shows the Sea of Galilee toward the north and the Dead Sea to the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the left. One of those standard type of maps. And if you look down toward the bottom of that map, if you find the Dead Sea in the land of Palestine there, you've got the Sea of Galilee to the north, the Jordan River flowing south, and you've got the Dead Sea down below.

About two-thirds of the way down the length of the Dead Sea. If you allow about a third of it to still be there, you've got a line there one-third up. Straight west, about halfway, slightly less than halfway maybe, between that part of the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean shore, that's where Beersheba is.

Beersheba is in the southernmost reaches of the land that is promised to Israel. It is going to become sort of a stock phrase in the prophets and in the latter days of the monarchy when they talk about from Dan to Beersheba. David is going to number the people over in Chronicles, from Dan to Beersheba.

When they talk about something over the whole land, it's just a stock phrase, from Dan to Beersheba. Dan, if you look at the very top of the map, if you look north of the Sea of Galilee, about a finger's width or so, there's a small pond-looking thing that typically is not even labeled, and then above that, about an equal distance, is where you find Dan. So Dan is the northernmost.

Dan is almost on a latitude line with Tyre up there. Dan to Beersheba, from the north to the south. Beersheba, this southern area between the coastline and where Beersheba is, this was the region of the Philistines.

You had to pass through the land of the Philistines. You had to travel the way of the Philistines. It was the most direct route to get to Egypt.

You remember where Hebron was, and where Abraham had sort of pitched his tent for most of the time, was up closer to the northern area of the Dead Sea, up where Bethel and that region is, far to the north of Beersheba. Well, Isaac, when the famine comes, he has started traveling south, hasn't he? He's gotten to the land of the Philistines, the ancient Philistines, not the later ones necessarily that David's going to fight, but this region gives its name to whatever people dwell there, and in the earlier days, these were probably the Kaphtarim, the predecessors of the later Philistines, who have a different sort of a lifestyle. They're the ones that are going to dwell in the city-states of Gath, and so on.

But these earlier ones, under the Abimeleks and the Phecal, they lived down in this,

their southern border is with Egypt, and their northern border is with whoever's living up in the land there. So when Isaac is circulating down this region, this is when God tells him, as he's sort of fleeing the famine, he's heading south, trying to find some better pasturage and so forth, God says, Isaac, don't go to Egypt. Dwell in this land that I've promised you.

And Isaac obeys. Obedience in faith, obedience in the time of famine, obedience staying in a parched land when you know that there's more prosperous stuff to the south. Isaac is a man of faith.

Isaac takes God at his word, and he stays in the land, and he dwells here in Gerar, and he suffers grief over it. He has a little failure there over Rebekah, saying she's his sister, and then God starts prospering him. God starts blessing him.

And that's what we've seen here in chapter 26. Verse 12, Isaac sowed in the land and reaped a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him.

The man began to prosper, continued prospering until he became very prosperous. God is blessing him in the land of famine, in the time of famine. He obeys God.

He doesn't go to Egypt. He doesn't have that second episode like Abraham has when you work backward to Genesis chapter 12. When Abraham comes to the land, there's a famine, and he heads straight to Egypt.

We know everything that Egypt symbolizes, what it stands for. This Beersheba is the borderline. If you go any further than Beersheba, you're getting down into Egypt country.

And this is going to be significant for us because as he, in verse 14 of chapter 26 of Genesis, Isaac had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. And the Philistines envied him. Shades of Psalm 37.

They want what he's got. They can't make a go of it out there in these pasture lands. That's why they filled in the wells.

They weren't strong enough to go out there and prosper flocks and herds and possess that land. But they were determined that if they couldn't possess it, nobody else was going to either. We just saw a movie here not long ago.

It had Sean Connery in it. That's a sure fire bet. If you see Sean Connery, that's where it's going to get hit.

It had Michelle Pfeiffer in it. I don't remember the name of it now, but it was a story about these two lovers and this beautiful woman who was deeply in love with this guy that was the captain of the guard. He with her.

This jealous king was in love with the woman and she didn't care for him, so he hired a

wizard and put a curse on him. So by day she's a falcon and by night he's a wolf. And they can't ever get together.

Only at sundown and sunrise, in the moment when they change, they see each other, but they can't touch. I don't remember the name of that. It didn't have Sean Connery in it.

It didn't? Okay, it didn't. I thought it did. It had some other guy in it that was equally good.

Rutger Hauer, I think, was the guy. Anyway, this man was determined, this king was determined that if he could not have this beautiful woman, nobody else would have her either. And the old friar that was involved in this story tells him there's a way to break this curse.

If you can stand together before this king when it's not night or day, the curse will be lifted. Well, there turns out to be a time when that takes place and the thing is broken. And so they walk away and they're fixing to celebrate and be together, but the old king is still standing there and he can't bear to see the gal, this beautiful woman, going off with our hero.

So he grabs a spear or something and he's going to run in there and kill somebody. He's going to mess up the deal. He can't have her, but he doesn't want anybody else to.

Well, this is the way of the wicked. This is the way of the envious. And these Philistines down here are not normally warlike and so forth, but they can't figure what is the secret of his success.

He's prospering and we can't figure that out. We want what he's got. If we can't have it, we don't want anybody else to have it.

And so they couldn't prosper enough to go fill in this wilderness area, so they went and shoveled dirt in the wells. It was a security risk. They didn't want somebody else moving in there and taking possession of this land, being on their borders and edging them out, so they filled in the wells that Abraham had dug years before.

So Abimelech said from Isaac, Go away from us. You're much mightier than we. This is the whole reason we filled in the wells.

We don't want somebody strong like you living on our periphery, so move on out there, Isaac. So Isaac departed from there in verse 17, pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar. This is going to be out away from the town in the city-state where Abimelech holds forth.

And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father. The Philistines had stopped him after the death of Abraham. He called him by the

names which his father had called him.

Now this is not only a circumstance that helps us understand what's going on between Isaac and the Philistines, but this also has some illustrative or typological significance for us. What is a well of water? What does water symbolize throughout the Scripture? It is the means of cleansing. It is the means of washing, the washing of water and the renewing of God the Holy Spirit.

And that is the water of the Word. The Word regenerates us. The Word rehabilitates us.

The Word renews us. It transforms us by the renewing of our minds. And the tree that is planted by the rivers of water that spreads its root and spreads its branches and becomes a place where others can be blessed, the birds of the air are going to come and nest in the branches.

You find that in Psalm 1 after talking about the man that does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful. His delight is in the law of the Lord. That is what he meditates in day and night.

He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. This water throughout the Scripture symbolizes the nourishment, the life-giving necessary resource that God gives us so that we can live and be fruitful. Well, why does God not preserve the wells of Abraham? Why doesn't He park an angel with a flaming sword by the wells of Abraham so Isaac can just show up and enjoy the wells that his father dug? Well, I find it significant that even though Abraham was prosperous and even though Isaac is Abraham's heir, Abraham's possessions go away in the famine and God gives Isaac his own possessions.

He doesn't just have a ready-made, pre-built inheritance. He is the heir of his father, but the famine takes all that away and God re-blesses, re-invents the heritage for Isaac and gives him his own possessions. We always tend to look at the difference between someone who is a self-made man and has built his own fortune in commerce or industry or agriculture or whatever, versus someone who just inherited all that from their father.

Isaac doesn't have to say, well, all this stuff you see here, my old man put all this together and I just took the reins when he passed on. All of that went away and Isaac has his own gifts from the Lord. God has fulfilled and made real his covenant promises in Isaac's sight because Isaac starts from scratch when he leaves Gerard.

God gives him his own heritage. His heritage from his father is primarily spiritual and even when it comes time to sustain these flocks and herds and as he expands, he doesn't find the pre-dug wells of his father. He goes out and re-digs.

Now, he's going to find the same water in the same places as his father, but he's got to dig his own well. He's got to find his own resource there. And it's a reminder, to me at least, of the fact that even in the spiritual realm, we can grow up in a church, we can

come up in a Christian home or we can become associated with those who have gone before us, a lot of us who study the Word of God and have resources, books and things that have been written, journal articles and writings of great men of the past who did their digging in the Word of God.

It's interesting that these are wonderful resources and there's a lot you can learn, but ultimately, in developing a relationship with God, we can never get a relationship with God by proxy and we can never be built up in our souls on the coattails of someone else, not even a pastor, not even a great man of faith of the past. We can't go drink from his well. We've got to go dig our own well.

We've got to find our own source and application of the Word of God in our lives. And people sometimes forget this. We can grow up in a church and, well, this was the church where my parents went and this is the tradition that my family has come up in and we've been something-ists for generations.

And by golly, it was good enough for grandpa. It was good enough for the old-time religion. It was good enough for grandma and grandpa.

It was good enough for mom and dad. It was good enough for me. I'm in the same church, in the same place, with the same songs and the same traditions.

That is not going to give us a living faith. Now, we may end up digging our well in the very same place and arriving at the very same conclusions. And praise God, if you're following in the footsteps of forebears who were actually on the narrow road going through the straight gate, then like Isaac does, you're going to be digging those wells in the same place as your fathers did.

But not always. Some of these things that we inherit are not always the best things. We've got to dig our own wells.

We've got to find our own water and find our own relationship with God. You can't borrow. You can't inherit.

You can't get in a can from somebody handing it to you, relationship with God or maturity in your soul and an understanding and an appreciation for the things of God. You've got to shovel the dirt out yourself. You've got to find that water.

And if you're following in the footsteps of people of faith, you'll find that you're digging in the same place and finding the same water. But it wasn't pre-dug. It wasn't there just for the taking.

You had to dig. You had to do your own digging. You had to persevere.

And the interesting thing is Isaac digs these wells and what happens? 18 of Genesis 26

Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father. The Philistines had stopped them up with dirt. Verse 19 Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found a well of running water there.

But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen saying, the water is ours. So he called the name of the well Ezek which means quarrel because they quarreled with him. Then they dug another well and they quarreled over that one and he called the name of it Sitna which means contention or strife.

And this can sometimes happen. I can't help but think of the fact of as I mentioned earlier some of the great churches that I've belonged to and been in that I thought were so healthy and were doing so well and I look and now they're gone. And the people are scattered and gone elsewhere.

And yet it was those churches in their day may have been a great well of water for people who attended there. But the Philistines can take over your well and fill it with dirt. And you can re-dig in the same place.

You can try to work from within. You can try to have that church be the same thing to you that it was to your father. And maybe it's not.

Maybe the Philistines have taken over that territory and you can't have the peace and the growth and the abundance in that place that your father had. I've seen the Philistines take over a church and divert it and change its path and change what it stands for. And that is no longer a well of water where you can camp and be nourished.

And what do you do? Do you fight over it? Does Isaac do like his father Abraham and gather an army and gather some allies and say we're going to fight to the death over this well? Isaac doesn't do that. Look at verse 22. He moved from there and dug another well.

He tried re-digging the wells of his father but the Philistines kept taking him over. So Isaac left there. He found his own place and dug a well.

And they did not quarrel over that one. And he called the name of that well Rehoboth, spaciousness. Now we've got room.

I can dwell here. I've got my well of water and there's no contention. There's no quarrel.

There's no strife. I've found my own space as they like to say in the 90s. Now the Lord has made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land.

I don't have to fight over this one. If the Philistines want the old wells... Isaac has every right to that. His father dug it.

His father named it. He re-dug it. And the Philistines took it over.

He says fine, take it. I'm not going to contend. I'm not going to quarrel.

I'll go dig my own well. I'll give it my own name. That's where I'm going to dwell.

That's where I'll be fruitful and prosper. And there's a wonderful lesson there for us because Isaac doesn't just do this because he's a pushover. He does this because he has faith in God.

He says the Lord will give me a space. Here, the Lord has given me a space. I dig and I find water here and I don't have to fight anybody over it.

It's a wonderful example of faith. The meek truly shall inherit the earth. If they place their trust in the Lord, if it's genuine humility, wait on the Lord.

He will give you the desires of your heart. Let's pause here and take a break. When we resume, we'll find out what happens to Isaac once he finds his own water.