

SERMON GENESIS 26 'Blessing and prosperity'
Series 'God moves in a mysterious way' #3
IBC Eindhoven, 7 February 2021

INTRODUCTION

- * This chapter seems not in place from a modern point of view. The story would flow more naturally from Genesis 25 to chapter 27
- * But Bible is not primarily interested in getting all the facts in chronological order, but is focused on teaching - Torah
- * This chapter teaches us about blessings, about what God has promised to Abraham, how God fulfils his promise to Isaac and what about to be passed on to Esau and Jacob. It is preparing the reader for chapter 27. Who will receive the blessing? What is the blessing all about?
- * Last 2 verses 34+35 (Esau and his Hittite's women) also preparing for what comes next
- * Very difficult subject: blessing and prosperity. What is the relationship between obedience to God, blessing from God and this worldly prosperity? What does the Bible teach us?

GENESIS 26

1. Three stories remind us of Isaac's father Abraham - like father like son
 1. Famine - but now Isaac had to stay and not go to Egypt
 2. Wife = sister
 3. Water wells - however no fighting - Isaac a man of peace
2. God blesses Isaac
 1. Verse 3 'stay.. and I will bless you'
 2. Verse 12 '... hundredfold because the LORD had blessed him'
 3. Verse 24 'I will bless you'
 4. Verse 29 'And you are blessed by the LORD' - confirmed by Abimelech
3. Blessing = this worldly prosperity
 1. Verses 12-16 very wealthy... too powerful for the Philistines
 2. Verse 22 'Rehoboth - LORD has given us room and we will flourish in land'
 3. Verses 32-33 'Beersheba = 7 wells'

BLESSING AND OBEDIENCE

1. Genesis 26:5,24 - 'because Abraham obeyed me.'
2. Psalm 37:3-4 'Trust in the LORD and do good, dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart.'
3. Malachi 3:10 - 'bring the whole tithe... test me in this... I will pour out blessings...' often used by preachers of prosperity gospel
4. Mark 10:29-31 "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first." + Philipians 4:19

BLESSING AND TEMPTATION

1. Don't grab blessing
 - Psalm 73:2-4 + 13 *But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.' Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments.*
 - // excessive wealth in modern times
2. Don't desire blessing
 - temptation to focus on the blessing as the motivation for our obedience...
 - 1 Timothy 6:9-10 *Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*
 - Stay away from gambling, lotteries etc.

3. Don't try to control blessing
 - Because true blessing from the Lord is a gift and cannot be managed, not even through obedience - Matthew 6:19 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth' and verse 25 'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.' Lose your life for Christ's sake and you will find it - Matthew 16:25 and John 12:24-25

*These temptations have in common the focus on the blessing instead on the One who blesses,
on the gift instead of the Giver!*

BLESSING AND PURPOSE

1. GIVE THANKS AND ENJOY

- 1 Timothy 4:4-5 *For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*

2. SHARE GENEROUSLY

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

3. HOPE FOR THE TRUE LIFE

- 1 Timothy 6:17-19 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. Reflect on the prosperity of Isaac. Think of at least three reasons why God would bless him in this way. What does this teach us about God?
2. Read Mark 10:29-31 again. Can you give an example of 'materialised' reward for choosing to follow Jesus? Can you give an example of the opposite and how do you deal with disappointments in this area?
3. 'The love for money is the root of all kinds of evil' - 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Why would this be and how do we stay away from this temptation?
4. '*In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*' 1 Timothy 6:19 Comment on this sentence and re-phrase in your own words.