

# Further up, Further in

## Resources for Continued Study

### "GOD'S FAITHFUL PROVISION IN ADVERSITY"

#### For individual study or discussion

When the LORD's prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal built their altars and called for divine fire to descend, the prophets of Baal got no answer. They danced and shouted and even slashed themselves with swords and spears until their blood flowed, but there was no response. (1 Kings 18:22-29)

What a contrast to the worship offered by Isaac at Beersheba! The LORD appeared to Isaac and not only promised great blessings but also spoke the consoling words that every frightened child wants to hear after awaking from a nightmare: "Don't be afraid—I'm here with you." Isaac's response? He built an altar in the place God appeared to him, pitched his tent there, and dug a well. He worships not in order to *get* God's attention or favor but to *give* praise, honor, and adoration to the One who loves him. And the tent and digging for water? Well, he's perhaps not unlike the comforted child who nestles between her parents and falls immediately back to sleep. Wouldn't everyone want to make their home and look for life-giving water in the exact place where *El Shaddai*, Almighty God, had appeared?

- 1) So often we tend to think of God's blessing as something that ebbs and flows. A year of bad crops—a year of good crops. Barrenness—twins. Fearful enemies—peaceful allies.
  - Is this an accurate picture of how God blessed Isaac? Why or why not?
  - What blessings did Isaac always possess? And what blessings can we be sure of in our own lives? A good place to start reviewing the blessings that are ours is Ephesians, chapter 1.
- 2) Abimelech's rosy description of how he and his people have treated Isaac in the past is a gross exaggeration—the Philistines had not always treated Isaac well and waved him farewell in peace. In a dry and dusty land, they had filled up Isaac's wells with dirt and then told him to scam because he had grown too powerful. (See vv. 15-16, 29.) Isaac nonetheless signed a peace treaty with him and gave him a feast.
  - What do you think Abimelech perceived about Isaac that made him want to pursue peace with him instead of war? (See v. 28)
  - Contrast Isaac's interaction with Abimelech and the Philistines to Esau's decision to marry two Hittite women. What do these two different ways of interacting with unbelievers teach us?
  - In 2 Corinthians, Paul thanks God, "who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." (2 Cor. 2:14) How should we be the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing? (See 2 Cor. 2:15-17)
  - How can the evidence of God's blessing in our lives lead to peace in our families and our communities?



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

DATE: May 9, 2021

SPEAKER: Brian/Frank

SERIES: The Life of Jacob

PASSAGE: Gen. 26:17-35

### Family Dinner Table

If you've played or watched baseball and softball, you know the rule is "three strikes and you're out." No one gets a 4th try at hitting the ball.

As we read through the story of Isaac and Jacob, one of the amazing things we see is that there is never a point where God tells them, "That's it! You're out! That was your third failure." There are many religions in the world in which you can only be favored if you do everything that's required. You say the prayers, you follow the rules, you give the right offerings, and then (you're told) you will be blessed.

Our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, does not wait for us to hit a home run. Nor does he throw us out of the game if we mess up too many times. After Isaac lied about his wife, showing that he really cared only about himself and not about the promises of God or the protection of his wife, God appeared to him again. He encouraged Isaac by telling him not to be afraid because he, the Lord, was with him. And he declared that Isaac would be greatly blessed.

What does it really mean for us on a day by day basis that God's favor and blessing is *not* dependent on our faithfulness? Does it mean that it doesn't really matter whether we try to obey God or not? Explain your answer.

#### PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Tennessee Valley Presbytery

#### PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Janet and Peter, supported  
missionary partners