

Sowing and Reaping in Famine

Biblical Principles for Prosperity in Difficult Times

Genesis 26

We find ourselves at the close of the year and it has been a season of famine in the land. Moreover, it does not appear that the season is over and while the voices we hear say it is getting better, it does not appear to be so.

Let's turn our attention to **Genesis 26:1-11**.....

And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down unto Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister; for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 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. And Abimelech said, what is this thou hast done unto us? One of the people might lightly have lain with thy wife, and thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us. And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

The central character in this story is Isaac, who is the son of Abraham and the carrier of the covenant of God in the earth. In **Genesis 12:10-20** there was a grievous famine in the days of Abraham and he went down to Egypt to sojourn there during the famine, so it seemed logical for Isaac to go to Egypt as well. However, the Lord appeared to him and instructed him to "dwell in the land that I will tell thee of." Herein we see a powerful principle of God, that he has a specific place for us to be and that it will be our place of protection, provision and blessing. This is always the case, but it is especially true in seasons of famine. We must hear from God concerning the place that he has for us, and then we have to get there. In **Genesis 22** we read the story of the testing (*or the "proving"*) of Abraham and see that he is led to a place "which I will tell thee of." In that place, God provides himself a lamb for an offering, and **Abraham called the name of**

that place Jehovah-Jireh. Jehovah-Jireh is the Lord God my provision *and it is a place.* It is a spiritual place of obedience and submission, but it is also a natural place where God has ordained for us to be. His protection, provision and blessing is at that place. If we are to successfully sojourn in famine, we must hear from God concerning the place he has for us to be and then we have to get there. The lamb was provided at a specific place, at a specific point in time and Abraham was required to hear and to obey and to get there to obtain the provision of God for that time. Now I want you to notice the nature of this provision. It was a natural provision that was supernaturally supplied. It **required** the partnership of God **and** man in order to bring the provision to full stature. The provision came to full stature when it met the purposes of God **and** man. God's part was to supernaturally supply the provision. *Man's part was to get to the place where the provision was supplied.*

Isaac is in the place God told him to be but he *is not dwelling as the righteousness of God.* He is not living in faith, he is living in fear. **V.7... For he feared to say...** He is doing what he was told to do, but he is not doing it in faith and confidence. He was not sure he was protected, provided for and supernaturally covered by God, so he is just hanging out, hoping for the famine to be over. In **v.8** we are told **... he had been there a long time...** so much time had passed and nothing was really happening. He was not sowing, he was not reaping, he was not increasing and he has a fundamental misunderstanding of what God had for him to do in that place. *Supernatural provision in a season of famine is not low hanging fruit.*

It is interesting to note that as we read the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, who are the patriarchs of the faith and the carriers and beneficiaries of the covenant of God in the earth in their times, every one of them is severely affected by famine. What God is saying is that even as the righteousness of God in the earth, we will be subject to seasons and famine will be one of them. The clear intent of the Word of God is not to teach us to avoid famine, but *to teach us how to go through it and prosper along the way.* It is an element of our dominion that God gave us to operate in.

Lets pick up again at **Gen. 26:12....** Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.

Between Gen. 26:11 and 26:12 something happened to Isaac to change the dynamic of the situation. Suddenly he gets revelation knowledge that he did not have before and everything changes. He gets a revelation that God supernaturally put me in this place, He is supernaturally taking care of me and protecting me, and that He is with me. Note that nothing changed on the outside, but everything changed on the inside of Isaac. And, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (**Proverbs 23:7**). He got a revelation from God in the situation and it changed the way he is thinking. Nothing changed at all on the outside, but everything changes on the inside. **Genesis 26:12-14, Then** Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and a great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. Up until that time He was just marking time, enduring the famine and thinking he would just hang out there until the famine was over. However, the instruction of God was to **“sojourn in this land...”** which means *to dwell for a time, not considering it your permanent residence but a temporary place to reside.* Now he

has revelation that he is supposed to sow and reap, buy and sell and exercise dominion over the place as long as he is there. There is a clear distinction made between **vs. 6**, “**and Isaac dwelt in Gerar.....**”, and **vs. 3** where the instruction was to “**Sojourn in the land**” Up until this point he is just dwelling there, but when he gets revelation from God he begins to sojourn, and sow seed and take dominion over the land and the position he finds himself in.

Now I want you to notice that until this point there were two famines going on. First of all, there was a natural famine happening in the earth, but there clearly was a spiritual famine of the Word of God in this place as well. Isaac, the carrier of the covenant of God in the land, is not sowing. **Mark 4:14** The sower soweth the Word, and of course the most fundamental word of all concerning seedtime and harvest, if you don't sow you don't reap. **Ecclesiastes 11:4** He that observeth the wind shall not sow; he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. Isaac is allowing the circumstances to stop him from sowing and as a result the circumstances stop him from reaping. **Note that it is not the circumstances that caused him not to reap, it is the fact that he did not sow.**

I don't want you to miss what was just said, because it is fundamental to prosperity in any season. **IT WAS NOT THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAUSED HIM NOT TO REAP, IT WAS THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT SOW.**

As he begins to sow, he begins to reap and because he is where God told him to be, doing what God told him to, he begins to reap **supernaturally**, because (**v 12**) **the Lord blessed him**. When you sow, you are going to reap as a natural consequence. That is **Galatians 6:7 ...** Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. God's intention for us is to reap **supernaturally**. Isaac begins to increase mightily, and his substance, wealth and reach are evident to the Philistines and they are envious of him. Moreover, he begins to exercise dominion with his wealth. Now his provision is coming to full stature. **Genesis 26:15** For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. Now the wells were a symbol of prosperity, of wealth and of dominion. Famines in that day were caused by lack of rain, and wells were a way of taking dominion over the famine. They were a visible reminder of the wealth, power and dominion of Abraham and so the Philistines had covered them up. As Isaac begins to redig the wells he is taking again the dominion of his father over the land and it causes fear in Abimelech and the people, and Abimelech asks him to leave because Isaac has become much mightier than the people among whom he dwells. **Genesis 26:16** And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us for thou are much mightier than we.

Genesis 26:17,18 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 in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. Note the choice of words here. He does not just name the wells, he **calls** them after the names by which his father **called** them. The word “call” means several things: to name or to give a name to, to designate or characterize as, to affirm to be, to summon, to arouse or to awaken, to demand. **Romans 4:17....**God, who quickeneth the dead, and **calleth** those things which be not as though they were. Isaac is doing more than just giving the well a name, he is exercising the spiritual principle of calling forth

those things that be not as though they are. He is sowing words and creating spiritual forces that go with them.

Isaac has now caught the flow of the supernatural in this. He has caught how God does what he does in this type of situation. God does not change the laws of the natural realm for us, such as the flow of seasons, he has for us to take dominion over them and use them for our benefit. **Genesis 8:22** is about seasons.....While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. If God changed the natural law for us, everyone would benefit the same, even those who are outside the covenant with God. By giving us dominion and authority over the natural law, God is creating an advantage for us over those outside the covenant. It is how God **sets us apart and above** those outside the covenant. More over, we have the right to decide how much apart and how much above we want to be: **Mark 4:24** And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. We are given the option to decide how much of the supernatural we want to walk in. The more we choose to understand how God does what He does, the more we get to use it to our advantage.

Genesis 26:19-33 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying The water is ours: And he called the name of the well Esek: because they strove with him. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of that Sitnah. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not; and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said: For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well. Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee: That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

Isaac has now begun to walk in the dominion and authority that God gave him, and that was his covenant privilege to walk in, and everything changes. Moreover, there is a confidence and assuredness that God is with him. He begins to redig the wells and call them after the names that his father had called them. In **v 19, 20** he dug a well, found water, and the herdmen of Gerar strove with him for the well. He named the well Esek, which means contention or strife, and he separated himself from the strife and gave the

well to the herdmen of Gerar. In **v 21** he dug another well, they strove for that also, and he called the name of that Sitnah, which means opposition. In **v 22** he dug a well that they did not strive for, and he called the name of it Rehoboth, which means a broad place, a moist place, or a wealthy place, and he said “for now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

In **v 24** the Lord appears to him and reaffirms the covenant with him, and in **v 25** he builds an altar. **In v 26 - 31** he makes a covenant with Abimelech and his people for the purpose of staying out of strife. It is evident to them that Isaac is the blessed of the Lord, and they saw certainly that the Lord was with him. Even though according to **v 27** they hate him and they sent him away, they recognize the anointing of the Lord upon him and want to enter into a covenant with him for that reason. Isaac recognizes that he needs to stay out of strife, so he enters into a covenant of peace with them, and sends them away in peace.

In **v 32, 33** as a result of his determination to stay out of strife and to stay in peace and unity with Abimelech, and entering into a covenant of peace with Abimelech, he enters into the supernatural favor of God and finds another well with exceedingly abundant water and they call the name of that place Shebah, which means the sacred full well. It became the city of Beer-Shebah meaning a well of indefinite supply.

Famine is a season just like abundance is a season, and there is a clear message in the Bible concerning famines, and the word is that we will be enduring famines. God wanted us to know that there would be seasons of famine and the objective was not to just endure through famine but to take authority and dominion over it and prosper through it. There were famines in the times of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and all of these men, who were the carriers of the covenant of God in the earth, were affected by **and greatly prospered** through famine. God wanted us to see how he protected and provided for them in seasons of famine, and if he protected and took care of them, He will do the same with us. His objective was to show us that He wanted us to prosper and have dominion even in the most difficult of times, and to show us how to do it.

Question for consideration:

In **vs 12**, *Then Issac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.*

What was it that Issac sowed?

Here are some elements to consider:

- *My words. Are they just my words or am I speaking God's words, that are pregnant with the life, integrity and infallibility of God himself? Am I describing what is or what I want things to be, calling forth what is or what is not?*

- *God's word as definitive spiritual law, infallible, unchanging, inerrant, eternal. Has the authority of spiritual law been established in me? Do I have spiritual law working for me and not against me?*
- *Covenant. Do I know and understand my covenant with God? It is my covenant that entitles me to use spiritual law to pray effectively and to take dominion over the circumstances of my life, and it is my covenant that enables my helper, the Holy Spirit, to work with me to see things come to pass.*
- *My faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for (confidently expected) , the evidence of things not seen. Abraham, the father of our faith, was fully persuaded that God was able to do what he had promised. Am I fully persuaded likewise?*
- *Development in the things of God. Am I growing and have an earnest desire to grow in the things of God, such as integrity, humility, thankfulness, truthfulness, the authority of God, his word and the reality of his person in my life? **Is Christ being formed in me?***
- *Development in relationship with God. The honor and worship of God is a key element in prayer, and it is most effective when it is birthed and sustained out of a love relationship and not a duty or obligation. Do you come to prayer to give as much as you get, and do you come to prayer for the joy of the relationship?*