

Son of Slave, Son of Promise

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Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0:00] Well, we're continuing our series through the book of Genesis this morning, and we've come to Genesis chapter 21. And so if you would, please take your Bibles, open them up to Genesis chapter 21.

If you don't have a copy of God's Word with you, that's okay. We have them nearby in a seat back in front of you somewhere nearby. You should be able to find a Bible. And I would encourage you to actually have a copy of God's Word open as we walk through this together this morning.

So Genesis chapter 21, and when you've found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised.

And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God has made laughter for me.

[1:11] Everyone who hears will laugh over me. And she said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age. And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, Cast out this slave woman with her son.

For the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac. And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman.

Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you. For through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

[2:15] When the water and the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bow shot, where she said, Let me not look on the death of the child.

And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy. And the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.

And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

At that time Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, said to Abraham, God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity.

[3:24] But as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear. When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's

servants had seized, Abimelech said, I do not know who has done this thing.

You did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today. So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart.

And Abimelech said to Abraham, what is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart? He said, these seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.

Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines.

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines.

[4:33] Grass withers, flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we pray once more, Lord, that you would bless the preaching of your word.

Give us ears to hear and to receive the truth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. One thing I've noticed is when moms get together, especially new moms, they love to swap birth stories.

All the details of the birth stories, good and bad, what went right, what went wrong, how long it took, when the water broke, had you made it there, had you not.

Did you get the epidural? Did you go all natural? Was the baby early? Was the baby late? They like to talk about this, and for good reason, right? Having a child is a major milestone in anyone's life. They have waited at a minimum nine months for this child to arrive, although for most mothers they've waited and longed for and prayed for this child much longer than that. And on top of that, it is just a miracle of God that God forms a life, prepares it when mother and father come together, forms a life, and then at long last eventually brings that life out into the world.

[5:50] It's a miracle. Our passage this morning here in Genesis chapter 21 is the story of a long-awaited, miraculous birth.

And we get to hear the story here of the birth of Isaac. And we get to see the kind of messy family that he's born into. All of this family drama just kind of happens right away.

And we've been waiting and waiting a long time for this promise to be kept. And finally, at long last, the child of promise has come.

But, you know, as I read this story this week, it was interesting to me. I wonder if you noticed the emphasis in this chapter. What was emphasized here in this birth story is not us.

It's not Abraham. And it's not even Isaac, this long-awaited child of promise. You would think that he would get a little bit more page time, wouldn't you? But he's not getting the attention you might think.

[6:49] We finally get this long-awaited birth of this promised child. And then we're off to a story about Ishmael. And then we're off to this story about Abraham and Abimelech. I mean, what do we do with that?

How does that fit in with this chapter? Here's what I want us to see and what I think ties this whole thing together this morning. But the emphasis here in this passage is on the Lord.

And the main character here in this story is God. His power in the birth of this promised child. His provision and his protection of Ishmael.

His plan and his purposes for redemption as we zoom out to the big picture behind this passage. And then his continued faithfulness to all of his promises.

God is the hero of the story. So let's take a look here. And we'll see this in four ways this morning. This will be our outline if you're taking notes. The four ways God is emphasized here in Genesis chapter 1.

[7:52] First, we see God's power here in the birth of Isaac. God's power here in verses 1 through 7. Look there with me to verse 1. And don't lose sight of the buildup to this moment, okay?

Abraham has been waiting over 25 years now since God first promised him the birth of a child. Over 25 years of delay.

And now finally, at long last, the child has come. You remember God called this pagan man out of his hometown. He made promises to him. Promises of land.

The land of Canaan. The promises of offspring. This old, barren man. God told him it would be the father of a multitude more numerous than the stars of the sky.

And we've been waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting for this moment when this promise would finally come to pass. And now, at long last, here it is. Verse 1 says, The Lord visited Sarah as he had said.

[8:54] The Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. At the time of which God had spoken to him. This is a miracle.

And you just think about all the obstacles that God has had to overcome in order to bring this child into the world. You remember there were threats of famine in the land. And there were threats of war all around.

There were threats of family strife there with Abraham and Lot. Not to mention the threats of Abraham's own foolishness. And Abraham's own faithlessness. Giving away his wife not once but twice into the hands of other men.

Not to mention the natural obstacles. Abraham's age. Sarah's old age. Sarah's barrenness. And you remember how many times Abraham tried to work around the promises of God.

How he tried to take matters into his own hands. Take Eleazar of Damascus. He said, let him be my heir. And God said, no. You will have a son.

[9:56] How Sarah gave Abraham Hagar and said, have a child with her. He'll be your heir. And God said, no. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son.

I know this looks impossible. And it is. Abraham, that's exactly the point. This whole thing is about God's power.

This whole thing. God has so orchestrated this birth that it cannot be explained any other way than by a miracle of the power of God.

There is no denying it. God has accomplished this. This birth was not just unlikely from a human perspective. It was impossible from a human perspective.

I mean, you see the emphasis here on God's activity, don't you? Here in verse 1, it doesn't say Abraham and Sarah conceived a child. What does it say? The Lord visited Sarah as he had said.

[10:57] And the Lord did to Sarah as he promised. Why does Moses tell the story this way? Moses tells this story like this to make certain that you and I understand that we see this is not Abraham and Sarah's doing.

This is the work of the power of the Lord. God Almighty has done what he promised by his power alone.

Church, you know, we ought to tell our story like this. God's people ought to know more than anybody else in the world that the main actor, the main character in your life, the main actor in your story, it's not us and what you do and what you can accomplish by your own efforts.

Who is it? It's the Lord. Who gets the center stage in your story? As you talk about your life and your accomplishments, your job, your family, your dreams, your hopes, your past, your future, who gets center stage?

Is it you? The Lord Almighty ought to take center stage in your life and in the way you talk about your life.

[12:16] Here we see Abraham and Sarah. They've both failed over and over and over again. They've tried to take matters into their own hands. But here it seems like they get it, doesn't it? Isaac is born and what does Abraham do?

Immediately he obeys the word of the Lord. Verse 3, it says, Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac, as God had commanded.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old. Why? As God had commanded. Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

And Sarah gets it too, doesn't she? She understands. She knows how incredible this birth is.

There's no denying it. And she says, everybody's going to laugh when I tell this story. God has given me laughter.

An old woman like me bearing at that. And there's no way I can possibly get pregnant. But here am I and here's my son, God. God has done it by his power alone.

[13:24] So we see God's power is emphasized here. Second, we see God's protection and provision here in verses 8 through 21.

And it's interesting how the focus here shifts, isn't it? Isaac is the child of promise. Isaac is the one through whom the Savior, Jesus, eventually will come.

Sarah is the chosen mother. She's the one who bears the seed of promise. But almost immediately, we shift our attention away from these main characters here to Ishmael and Hagar.

Look there to verse 8. It says, the child grew and was weaned. This was usually around age 2, sometimes age 3, but even up to age 5 in this culture.

And they throw a celebration. A baby boy's growing up. Abraham's 100. Maybe he doesn't know how many more celebration milestones he'll get to be around for. So they throw a celebration here.

[14:21] Come celebrate with us. Abraham makes a great feast. And everybody's eating. And they're happy. And they're celebrating. And then all of a sudden, it's like the record scratches. And there's a problem here.

Sarah looks over. And she sees Ishmael. Except she doesn't even call him Ishmael, does she? Look at that. She says, she sees that son of Hagar.

Hagar the Egyptian. Hagar the Egyptian who had a child with my husband, Abraham.

She looks over and she sees Ishmael laughing. Now, it's a play on words here. Isaac means he laughs. Sarah said God made laughter for her.

You remember how Sarah responded when God promised a child? She laughed. But now, the son of the slave woman is laughing. And Sarah does not think it's funny.

[15:23] It's clear, I think. He's not just having a good time and joining in and laughing and enjoying the party. He is picking at his little brother. He's mocking him. This is a laughing at, not a laughing with.

He's laughing at Isaac. Paul, in the passage that was read earlier this morning in Galatians chapter 4, He calls this persecution. He's picking on his little brother.

And Sarah, we see she goes into mama bear mode, doesn't she? She goes, she skips right past time out, right past no cake for you. And she says, she just goes right for the neck. Cast out this slave woman.

Doesn't even call her by her name. Cast out this slave woman with her son. For the son of that slave woman will not be heir with my son Isaac.

You can almost feel the tension through the page, can't you? I imagine everybody at the party kind of just puts down their forks and they perk up. There's a problem going on here.

[16:25] There's some drama happening here at the party. And here's Abraham caught in the middle. There's mama and baby over here. They're mad at mama and baby over here. And Abraham's like, I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

I just want to throw a party here. Verse 11 says, It was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. Isaac is the son of promise, yes.

But Ishmael still is Abraham's child. But, verse 12, God said to Abraham, Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman.

Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you. For through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This is election.

This is God's choosing of one son, Isaac, over one son, Ishmael. Ishmael is not in the line of promise.

[17:23] Isaac is the line of promise. It's through Isaac that Abraham's offspring will come. So the blessing of the world will come not through Ishmael, the product of Abraham's physical effort, but the blessing of the world will come through Isaac, Isaac, the work of God alone.

Both are descendants of Abraham physically, but only one is the true son of Abraham spiritually, and the heir of the promises made to Abraham. Paul picks this up in Romans chapter 9 to explain why not all who are physically Jews are truly Jews.

He says, Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring. But, he quotes, Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of promise are counted as offspring.

We'll come back there. But even so, would you just look and notice how God cares for Ishmael? Our natural thought might be, Well, if Isaac is the elect one, then God doesn't really care for Ishmael, right?

[18:46] Wrong! Look there to verse 13. God says he has purposes for Ishmael. I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman. Jump forward to chapter 25, and you see how God blesses Ishmael with many descendants.

He multiplies him and his offspring. And not only this, God also protects and provides for Ishmael. You see this story of this dangerous journey into the desert.

Abraham sends Hagar off with some bread and some water, and they go to the wilderness of Beersheba, which if you know anything about this area, you should know that it is hot and it is dry. This isn't like forest wilderness. This is desert wilderness. And this area of the world, they're in the desert of Palestine. And it only gets maybe about 6 to 12 inches of rainwater per year.

And pretty quickly, verse 15, says they run out of water. So Hagar puts her child, who is about 15 years old at this point, Ishmael is now a teenager, puts her son under a bush and goes off about the distance of a bow shot.

[19:58] Why? So that she won't have to be there and see her son die. And as she sits there opposite him, she just lifts up her voice and she weeps, she cries.

But what happens there? Verse 17, what happens? God hears the voice of the boy. And the angel of the Lord, he calls to Hagar from heaven and says, What troubles you, Hagar?

Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy. Hold him fast with your hand. I will make him into a great nation. And God opens their eyes and she sees a well of water and she goes and she fills up the water and she gives Ishmael a drink of the water.

God cares for Hagar. God provides for her and for Ishmael. And once again, just as he did before in chapter 16, God comes and appears as the angel of the Lord.

He comes to her rescue. He comes and he cares for this outcast, rejected, castaway nobody. And it's just an incredible reversal, isn't it?

[21:10] And within just a few verses, Ishmael goes from being near the point of death, they're dying of thirst under a bush, to now verse 20, he's grown up. He's got a home there in the wilderness.

He's got some skills with a bow. He has a wife now from Egypt. You see this grand reversal in the life of Ishmael. He's truly blessed. But church, we ought to zoom out and ask, well, how in the world did this happen for Ishmael?

God did that. God pursued him. God pursued his mother. God heard their cries. God provided water to drink.

God had a plan for his future. But once again, who's the main character of the scene? It's the Lord. You know, so often we talk about the work of God for his people, and that is primary.

Those who have by his grace been included and brought into this line of promise and blessing, not by their own doing, but by Christ's doing, by grace, through faith.

[22:18] But have you ever thought about how much God blesses those who are outside of the people of God? Have you ever noticed that Christians aren't the only ones in the world with food on their plate, or with families, or with jobs, or with houses, or with vehicles, or with joy, and with happiness in their life?

No, the sun shines on the righteous and on the unrighteous alike. This is what we call common grace. God, in his kindness, he pours out all sorts of blessings on all people, even on those who are outside of his special saving grace.

If you're not a believer, do you realize that it is God who gives you life? And do you realize that it is God who gives you breath?

Do you realize that it is God who provides every single blessing in your life? Do you realize that it is God who gives you a mind to think, and a voice to speak, and hands and feet to go and do the work that you do?

Do you realize that it is God who gives you food to eat, and water to drink? Do you realize that it is God who sustains your life? You know, if you're not a believer, you know the right response to these things?

[23:48] It is to turn to the Lord and give him praise for all that he's done for you. God provides for, he protects, and he has purposes for the believer and the non-believer alike.

But this raises an important question, doesn't it? Which one are you? Are you like Ishmael, the product of the flesh, enjoying God's common grace, blessings, receiving good things from the Lord, but only in this life?

Or are you like Isaac, a child of promise, the product of God's work and power alone?

Which one are you? In other words, what is your birth story? And we need to zoom out here for a minute and see third, third point this morning, we need to see God's purpose behind all of this.

Third, God's purpose for all of this. And here, I want us to turn to the book of Galatians. Go ahead and just flip there. Real quick, I don't usually make you do this, but I want you to lay eyes on Galatians chapter 4 this morning because the point that Paul is making here in Galatians chapter 4 is that these two children, Isaac on one hand, Ishmael on the other, they represent two very different birth stories, two very different identities, with two very different destinations, and everyone in this room is represented by one or the other.

[25:37] While you find it, Galatians chapter 4, I'll just recap quickly what's going on here in Galatians. There's a big problem in Galatia. You remember what it is? They have embraced what Paul calls a false gospel.

What did we just say? There is one gospel of Jesus Christ. One gospel. It's the good news that sinners, Jew and Gentile alike, can be justified, declared righteous, by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is a simple gospel. And it sounds almost too good to be true. It is so simple. Jesus has done everything needed.

All you must do is repent and believe. You put your faith in Christ. It doesn't matter what your track record is up to this point. It doesn't matter your birth origin to this point.

It doesn't matter if you're Jew or Gentile, slave or free. If you are united to Christ Jesus by faith, you are received, adopted, justified before the sight of God.

[26:46] There is one gospel message, one way of salvation for the one people of God, believing Jew and believing Gentile alike. There's not two peoples of God.

There's not two ways of salvation. There are not two ways to be His children. There is one. This is the message of Galatians.

Over and over and over and over again, he just hammers this home. Chapter 2, verse 16, he says, a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Know then, chapter 3, verse 7, know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. So, chapter 3, verse 29, being Jewish physically, only physically, does not make you an heir of any of the promises of God that He made to Abraham.

Not a single one. If you are Christ, He says, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. He just so desperately wants them to get this, that there's one gospel.

[27:59] Don't turn back to slavery, to the law. Don't go back to trying to earn your way to God by your own effort. Don't turn back to the flesh.

Just receive God's grace and power for you in Christ through faith. So now look to chapter 4. To help them get this, He reminds them of the story of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar and their two sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

Look there to verse 21. Galatians chapter 4, verse 21. He says, Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman, one by a free woman.

But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically.

These women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. She is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.

[29:14] She corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. Verse 28.

You brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.

So brothers, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman. Praise God. These two children, two birth stories, are two paths of salvation.

One theoretical and false, and one real and glorious. One is by the flesh, by works, by the effort of Abraham.

[30:28] One is by the sheer grace and power of God. One is by the law. One is in slavery. One is by the Spirit and in freedom.

One is by works and the other is by faith. Which one are you? Are you born naturally of the flesh, as all of us are, and are therefore still under the curse of the law?

Or have you, by the grace of God, through faith in Christ, been born again of the Spirit? Are you still under the old covenant of the law?

Or by His grace, have you been brought into the new covenant of God's grace in Christ? Which one? That answer, church, depends entirely on your response to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be the all-sufficient Savior of His people. You know what I mean by all-sufficient?

[31:40] That means He is enough. You can't add to all-sufficient. All-sufficient doesn't need your help.

You can't work towards it. You can't work your way into it. You can't earn it. You can't improve upon it. Nothing in your flesh can bring about one promise of God for you in Christ.

It simply must be received by faith, church. Have you responded to Christ by saying, thank you for giving me a road map to be a better person?

Thank you for teaching me how to improve upon myself and be a better man. Thank you for teaching me how to be a better woman. That is law.

And it cannot save you. Or have you responded by the grace of God to say, thank you, Christ.

[32:44] You have done it by your power, your work, your life, your death, your resurrection alone. That is my only hope and I praise you that you have done it.

And it's so simple. It's so simple. John tells us in John chapter 1 that Jesus, he, Jesus, came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ian DeGuid says on this passage that Hagar stands for those who depend on their own efforts to be accepted by God.

They are in bondage to the law and their standing before God is therefore inevitably temporary and precarious. Sarah, on the other hand, stands for those who are living by faith on the basis of the gospel.

[34:01] such people are not trusting in their own righteousness, but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ credited by God to their account.

They are the children of promise. Theirs is a liberty that Hagar could never know. which one are you? You know, it may be that this is all new information to you, right?

Maybe you hear this and you thought that to be a Christian just meant I just gotta do better, clean myself up, try a little harder, make God happy with me, perform a little bit better, and maybe, maybe by the grace of God, this is the first time that you're seeing that this whole thing from beginning to end is not dependent on your power.

It is God's power. It is God's doing. If that's you, just let me, let me just encourage you before we move on, respond this morning by putting your faith in Christ.

Please come talk with me or any other member of this church about what that means, what that looks like. If you have questions, please come. So we see the divine plan behind all of this, but we still, we still have this little story here at the end to deal with, don't we?

[35:19] So let's turn our attention there to our final point here, verses 22 through 34, and here, fourth, we see once again, once again, fourth, God's promises.

God's promises. Look there, starting in verse 22, and you may be wondering, like I was this week, how in the world does this story fit in with everything we just talked about?

And we go straight from this birth story and this family drama and now to another interaction with Abraham and Abimelech and what's going on here? We just dealt with this last week in chapter 20, and I won't spend much time here, but I just want you to remember the big picture here, okay? Remember? The big picture here, it's not about Abraham. It is not about Isaac. It is not about Ishmael. It's not about me.

It's not about you. The big picture here, it is all about God and His faithfulness to His promises, okay? You see that? Remember the promises God made to Abraham, a child and land.

[36:30] Offspring and the promised land. Well, we got the offspring now, finally, 25 years later. Despite Abraham's faithlessness, God remained faithful, and now we're left wondering, well, what about the land?

You remember how Abraham tried to mess that up too, don't you, last week? He made some pretty powerful enemies last week, chapter 20. He almost got a king and his whole family killed, but now, now, what we see here is a divine reversal of circumstance in Abraham's favor.

Everything that went wrong in chapter 20 now is going for Abraham here in chapter 21. Look there, look there to verse 22. We see, you see Abimelech comes to Abraham, now he's bringing Phicol, the commander of his army, and he says, God is with you in all that you do.

He has seen this, hasn't he? He's experienced this firsthand. You remember, God spoke to Abimelech in the dream because of Abraham. He's seen enough to know the power of Abraham's God, but he's also seen enough of Abraham to know his potential for deception.

So he makes him promise, swear to me, Abraham, that you won't deal falsely with me. You better start being honest with me. I need to know I can trust you.

[37:55] Don't lie again. I've been kind to you. You be kind to me. And Abraham says, okay, I swear. Now, this is where this gets really interesting to me, and if I can just have your permission to nerd out for just a minute on the rest of this passage, because the rest of this chapter, I still haven't figured it out.

But it serves as a sort of mirror image of chapter 20. Just notice this, okay? Abraham came to Abimelech in chapter 20.

Now, Abimelech comes to Abraham in chapter 21. Abimelech reproved Abraham for his sin in chapter 20. But here now, Abraham is reproving Abimelech for his sin in 21.

Abraham gave three excuses for his behavior. You remember chapter 20? You don't fear God. Technically, she is my sister. God made me do it. Now, chapter 21, we get to hear Abimelech's three excuses.

I don't know who did it. You didn't tell me. I'm just now hearing about this. Abimelech sent Abraham away with material blessings, cleared his name in chapter 20.

[39:08] Now, in 21, here's Abraham sending sheep and oxen to Abimelech and making sure everybody knows, hey, that's my well. What's going on here? To tell you the truth, I don't exactly know.

I tossed this around and around and around in my mind this week. I was laying there in the tent just thinking about it as we went camping as a church the other night. I even went so far as to reach out to one of my former professors who is a, just a brilliant Old Testament scholar.

I laid out everything to him that I just said to you that, Professor, this looks like a mirror image of chapter 20. Can you help me think through this, please? He got back to me yesterday and he said, Jonathan, I think that you are on to something here.

That's encouraging. Perhaps 20 is a mirror of 21. Makes sense. The question then is for what purpose?

And I'm reading this like, yes, exactly. That's what I want you to tell me, please. Help me out. Tell me what it is. And then he said, let me know where you land. End of email.

[40:24] Sent from my iPhone. So church, I have to keep digging, but here's my best guess, okay? Here's my best guess.

How do you explain such an incredible reversal? Did you notice how Abraham comes out after this whole exchange? He leaves now having made a covenant with this man who was once his enemy. He leaves now with an ally in the place of an enemy. Not only this, he now has a well here in the desert. Not only this, Abraham now plants a tree.

I mean, it looks like Abraham is going to be around here for a while, doesn't it? How do you explain this great reversal of circumstance? The secular explanation for this would be good fortune. Man, things just turned out for Abraham, didn't they? Abraham really had some good luck here. Just look how things just rolled in his favor. But we know this can only be explained as a work of a good and sovereign and powerful and covenant-keeping God.

[41:45] God has turned this whole thing around in Abraham's favor. But why? For what purpose?

I think Moses wants us to see that our covenant-keeping God despite our foolishness will be faithful to his promises.

God promised Abraham offspring despite his foolishness. He did it. Isaac is here and now likewise God promised Abraham this land and despite Abraham's foolishness God will make a way to turn all things in his favor for his good to fulfill all his promises.

Believer, do you realize that this same covenant-keeping God is working for you and in you with all his power to bring to pass every word of every promise made to you in Christ Jesus our Lord. God do you believe that his word will not fail that no obstacle whether from the outside or from the inside whether from the world or from your own foolishness no obstacle will stand in his way all things work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose all of this from beginning to end all of this church is God's work for God's glory it is about God he is the main character of the story God is the main character of your life life God is the main reason his glory is the aim of all human history it is all about him do you see the world this way believer do you realize that your new birth is the story of God doing not just the unlikely but the impossible in you that God has so orchestrated your new birth that it cannot be explained any other way than by a miracle of his power he alone has done it he has caused us to be born again and not just that but to be born again to a living hope an inheritance we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ heirs of all the world the true promised land in the age to come non-believer do you realize that the blessings that you receive in this life are meant to draw you to give glory to God to repent of your sin to put your faith in him to honor him and give thanks to him and to glorify him as you were made to do and Christian do you realize that our confidence and our hope of a certain future in the true promised land is not in our work is not in our performance is not in our faithfulness to him it is in his faithfulness to himself and thereby his faithfulness to us in Christ from beginning to end it is about him his power his faithfulness his goodness his glory now and forever amen father god we praise you for your faithfulness to your promises in Christ and lord we praise you for the grace that has brought sinners like us in to this line of promise not by our effort not by our goodness but by your sheer grace and mercy alone we praise you lord for the new life you've given us in christ if there are any who have yet to receive it lord would you work that in them this moment we pray in jesus name amen