

Genesis 25:1-11

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[0 : 00] Tonight, we're going to finish our series in the story of Abraham in Genesis.

If you want to turn to your Bible, Genesis is the first book of the Bible, and we're going to look at chapter 25. The first, nope, yes, chapter 25.

So we're going to be looking at the first 11 verses of that if you want to look at there. As we start, you know, I don't know if you've thought about this, but as we've looked through this whole story, one of the interesting questions in studying particularly the Pentateuch is to think through when was it written and who was it written for?

Because the Bible always tells history, and it tells true history, but it tells history with a purpose, often with a pastoral purpose. And I'm pretty confident that Moses wrote at least 99% of the Pentateuch.

The last part that talks about his death, he probably didn't write, although, you know, God may have inspired him to write that too. But if he didn't, the rest of it is all things that he wrote, which means that most likely this book was written either as Israel was wandering through the wilderness for 40 years, or as they're coming up to the brink of a promised land, knowing that they're entering into a land that is full of people who probably aren't going to welcome them.

[1 : 24] And there's a whole set of uncertainty that came with that. And if you know the story of how the Israelites handled that, they didn't handle it well.

They were afraid. They grumbled and complained. They fled in fear when God said, move forward in faith. They struggled over and over again to believe that God would actually be faithful to his promises, that God would actually take them into this promised land that he had said that he would.

They didn't see God at work necessarily in the day-to-day of their lives. And so they wondered, will God come through for us? Will God actually do it?

Maybe you've been there. Maybe you're there even tonight. Will God come through? Will he really be faithful?

Can we really trust him? Will he really have good things for me in this new place that I've moved to? Will he really comfort me and carry me through seasons of sorrow and loss, depression or loneliness?

[2 : 36] Will God really love me to the end? Even when I'm a nobody? Can God really wipe away my sins as bad as they really are?

Can God really give me a better life than the life that I can get by ignoring him and going after it all myself? Will God really watch over me if I am faithful to him, regardless of the cost?

These are questions that have risen in my heart at various seasons in my life. God, are you really going to come through?

I think as we look at this text tonight, it speaks powerfully to that. So we're going to look at, we're going to read Genesis 25 verses 1 through 11. We're going to read it and then I'm going to pray and then we're going to dive in and look at it.

So you can bear with me as I'm going to do my best with these names. You ready? Here we go. All right. So Abraham took another wife whose name was Keturah.

[3 : 50] She bore him Zimram, Jokshan, Midan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shua. Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan.

The father of Dedan was Asherim, Letushim, and Leumim. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephor, Hinnok, Abida, and Eldah.

All these were the children of Keturah. Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. But to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts. And while he was still living, he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward to the east country.

These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man full of years, and was gathered to his people.

Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar, the Hittite, east of Mamre.

[5 : 00] The field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with Sarah, his wife. After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac, his son, and Isaac settled at Bir Lahai Roy.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word, and thank you that in its dramatic, momentous, and its more mundane parts, Lord, you speak to us, and you reveal yourself to us.

Lord, I pray tonight as we look at this passage for a few minutes together, that you will help us to see what kind of God you are. Lord, and that you will strengthen us in our walk of faith through that.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Okay, so you might have thought after that grand introduction that we were going to get a grand passage, and we don't, do we?

We have a very mundane passage here, don't we? It's a little bit about this, and a little bit about that, and there are no grand pronouncements. And yet there are, in the midst of it, little clues where the writer is tying up threads that have woven through the story.

[6 : 12] And in tying up those threads, he's answering the question that any story reader would have thought, if you're reading this for the first time, well, Abraham has died.

What's going to happen now? This was, you know, there were promises to him, like, how is this going to go forward? And in the midst of it, the writer is reminding us about who God is.

In fact, I think that the writer is reminding us about the things that Abraham had learned about God. That God would be a faithful God, worthy of faith and trust to the very end.

So let's look at the signs of God's faithfulness in this text as we remember God's story together. So first, the first thing we see, and we see this in verses 1 through 6, is that God fulfilled his promise to Abraham to make him the father of many nations and to be a blessing.

Okay? So, we look through this, and there's this whole thing. Do you remember, first, let's go back and just remember the promises. Chapter 12, verse 2.

[7 : 22] This is what God said to Abraham. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse you.

And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And then again, later in chapter 17, verses 4 and 5, he picked up and he said, And God said to him, Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

No longer shall you be called Abram, but your name shall be called Abraham. For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. Okay?

So, when we look at verses 1 through 6, what do we get? Basically, we get an account of here to, previously up to now, never heard of, oh, by the way, there was another woman.

Oh, and who was she, and what the heck? So, here's the thing I want you to say. Don't get distracted by that. Right? Verse 1 says she was a wife. Verse, which one?

[8 : 24] Verse 5, 6. Verse 5 seems to be referring to her actually as a concubine. It is clear from the story that Abraham must have known her for a long time.

She was a part of the household for a long time. Because do you remember when God came to Abraham when he was 100 and said, I'm going to give you a son? And what did Abraham say? Uh-uh, that doesn't happen anymore.

The plumbing doesn't work. I can't do that. Right? You're going to have to do a miracle for that to happen. Which means that Keturah was on the scene even before then.

We don't know anything else about her. We don't know a lot about God's intent. We need to recognize that God in the Old Testament is often descriptive and not prescriptive.

So, this isn't license for us to go out and get a second wife when we are struggling with fertility. Just to sort of throw it out there. Like, this is, this is, so, what it is though is it's saying that God in his grace would use someone even like Abraham with all of his faults.

[9 : 34] And we've seen his faults. He already tried to produce an heir through Hagar. Here we see another, what I would say is a fault. But again, the Bible, he's, the writer here isn't dwelling on it.

He's just being factual about, hey, by the way, this was also true about Abraham. So, why does he say it? If it's not a moral story about do this or don't do this. He says it because he wants to, he wants to show you that at the very end of Abraham's life, God had fulfilled his promises to Abraham.

Suddenly, he had all these children. Oh, by the way, there, it wasn't just Isaac and Ishmael anymore. There were all, there were other children as well. And likely, Midian was the father of the Midianites, who were people who lived on the Arabian Peninsula.

We don't know what happened with the rest of these descendants. But what do we see in this text? Look with me again. What did Abraham do for them? First of all, he blessed them.

He gave them gifts. He, out of the bounty of what God had given him. Remember, Abraham seemed to be a pretty wealthy guy. He gave them good gifts and blessed them.

[10 : 46] And the second thing he did is he sent them away. And we'll pick this up in point three, so I'm not going to dwell on it now. But he sent them back to his homeland, back east, to where he came from originally, so that they would live in a good land where he knew they would be well provided for, yet not dwelling in the very land of promise that would be a greater fulfillment of other parts of God's promises to them.

So we see the fulfillment of him being a blessing and a father of many nations. And do you see God's character in being overflowing in this?

God isn't saying, hey, I've got a very strict plan and all these other things. Oh, I'm sorry, you, Ishmael, you're not a part of it. These children of Keturah, no, I'm sorry, you're not part of it. So you get thrown in the trash heap.

That's how we would think God would work, is that he'd just throw those people off. But it's not true. Instead, God in his abundant riches blesses Abraham and makes him a blessing to all of these children, even the ones that aren't the ones through whom God is going to work his great work in the world.

And this is the character of the God that Abraham had faith in. So that's the first thing we see, that God was faithful to that promise.

[12 : 08] Secondly, look with me in verses 7 through 10. Verses 7 through 10, we see that God gave Abraham a greater sense of a down payment on the land that he had promised him.

Do you remember back in chapter 12, again, God comes and this is the promise he gave. God led Abraham to Canaan and it says this in 12.5.

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Morah. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land.

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said to your offspring, I will give this land. Now look, here's the thing. At the end of Abraham's life, they had not gotten the land, right?

Even the audience, the Israelites having gone to Egypt, been delivered and brought back, they hadn't received the fullness of this promise. And yet, the author wants you to know, oh no, but God has been, God has shown that he will be faithful because, do you remember the story in chapter 23?

[13 : 18] Greg preached it in a couple weeks ago. But the writer makes sure we know exactly where Abraham was buried. He was buried with Sarah. He was buried in a plot of land that did not belong to anyone else.

Again, go back and read 23 and you'll see, Abraham insisted that he buy it and purchase it and own it as his very own. And God gave him favor to be able to do that.

And that little plot of land with a grave, with a cave, in which Abraham and Sarah were buried, was God's down payment saying, I will give you this land one day.

I have not forgotten my promise. And even though you can't see it yet, this is the foretaste of what I'm doing. It reminds us of what the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 11, that great chapter about the hall of faith, about Abraham and others like him.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

[14 : 28] For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had an opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. What the writer of the Hebrews does is take this little promise of a plan, of land, of a physical place where God's people will dwell.

And he blows it open to say, look, those who know God on this earth know that no place on this earth is actually their final home. There are strangers and exiles on this earth as long as they live, because they're looking forward, because they know that the homeland that their hearts are longing for is so much greater than anything that they've seen on this earth that is in fact heaven.

And that's where they have set their hope. And that's where they have set their desire. And so, as they live here, they have these little foretastes of what is to come.

I wonder if you've experienced a foretaste of heaven in your life. I think it can take all sorts of different forms. Stand at the base of the Rocky Mountains and look up at the majesty and grandeur of God's creation and know it's just a taste of how glorious the world was before the fall came in.

[16 : 05] Maybe it's sitting around with some good friends after supper with a fire in the fireplace on a cold winter evening talking and sharing, deeply connecting with each other and with the Lord, talking about significant and life things together.

And the sweetness of that connection with friends and fellowship with God is a foretaste. Maybe it's sitting in the symphony hall listening to Beethoven's Ninth swell and move and stir your soul.

A foretaste. There are so many different ways and different places where we experience foretastes of heaven. We experience it when we've sinned against our friend and we go to them and say, I'm sorry, it was wrong.

Will you forgive me? And they look at you with tears in their eyes and they say, I do. I forgive you. This is a foretaste of heaven.

This is what it will be like forever in all of it. C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory* writes this, the books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located in will betray us if we trust to them.

[17 : 30] He's writing about these kind of foretastes and these experiences. It was not in them, it only came through them. And what came through them was longing. These things, beauty, the memory of our own past, are good images of what we really desire.

But if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshipers. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, if you long for these things, for friends or for music or for nature to bear the weight of heaven, if you try to ask them to do that, they can't do it.

He says this, for they are not the thing itself. That is that thing that we most desire in our hearts. They are only a scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.

God gave Abraham and those Israelites reading this account a taste, a foretaste of the fulfillment of his promises by giving him this land and saying, I will give you this land, this land that points us ahead to heaven and being with God forever.

So we see God's faithfulness in making Abraham a father of many nations and a blessing to them. We see secondly, God's faithfulness in the down payment of a land for his offspring to live and to display God's glorious grace.

[19 : 07] And finally, in verse 11, we see God's sovereign providing for the line of promise through which the fulfillment of all that God has promised will come.

Right? Now we mentioned it earlier in verses 5 and 6, there's a little foretaste of this. Right? The writer is writing about this wife that we never knew anything about and listing all of his descendants.

And then in verse 4, right? Nope. Verse 5, you would think he would say something about, and this is how he provided for them. But no, the writer takes a complete left turn and says, oh, by the way, Abraham didn't give these people what he had.

He gave that to Isaac. There was a priority. And you remember, if you've been here listening through the story, the promise in 12 was you will be a father of great nation.

Abraham didn't have any kids at that point. We get all the way up to chapter 16 and it's years later and he still doesn't have any children. And they try to manufacture a child by using Hagar, a maidservant.

[20 : 19] And God says, no, this is not the way. Even though a child, a male heir is produced, he is still not the one who is the child of promise. And so again, then they wait again for a long time.

And then God finally gives Abraham and Sarah a child. Miraculously, Isaac is born beyond the age when it seemed like that would happen.

And then God says, oh, by the way, when Isaac is 11, God tells Abraham, go up on the mountain and sacrifice this son, the son of the promise. And Abraham, by that point, had learned how faithful God was.

And so he obeyed, even though he didn't understand. And even though he couldn't see how this would ever make any sense. Hebrews tells us that he believed that God could even raise the dead if that's what it would take.

But that God would continue to provide, to protect for this promise of this son who would be in the line of promise. When we get to verse 11, look with me at it.

[21 : 28] The writer is very intentional here. There are places in the scripture and even in this story, you'll see Isaac will do it. Isaac will want to give his blessing to his son.

We see the same thing with Jacob. Jacob wants to give his blessing to his sons. There is this paternal blessing that's meant to be passed down that can be a great help.

But that's not what this is. Because what you see is very intentionally in verse 11, it was after Abraham had died. The blessing came on Isaac.

And who did it come from? It came from God himself. You see, it wasn't Abraham's faithfulness that meant that God could move ahead with his plans.

It wasn't Abraham's righteousness that allowed God to move ahead with his plans for the world. but it was God himself who was doing this.

[22 : 27] And just as God who had been faithful to Abraham through his faithfulness and his faithlessness, through his failures and his successes, God who had shown himself to be faithful to his promises to Abraham now blesses Isaac and says, and I'm going to do the same thing for you.

I will be the same God for you. I will be the same God for you. Think about how the Israelites might have heard this story.

Do you think they would have heard it the way I think the writer wants us to? Because the writer, the Israelites wandering in the wilderness or on the brink of the promised land, what are they thinking?

Will God be faithful? And God is saying, am I not the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph? Am I not the God who delivered you from slavery in Egypt with a mighty hand and with great works?

I delivered you from one of the most powerful nations on the face of the earth and I've made you a great nation and I've allowed you to walk through wilderness for years providing for you supernaturally when there was no way that you could have provided for yourself?

[23 : 45] Have I not been that kind of God for you? Do you not believe that I will bless you as you go forward in faith?

We struggle with this, don't we? We struggle to believe that God's past results are indicators of his future performance you know that disclaimer past results don't always give right?

That's not true with God for God his past results are always a guarantee of his future performance which leads us to today what about us?

Friends, I wonder what are some of the promises that God has given to his people that you struggle to believe in? just read a few of them to you Philippians 1-7 he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus John 10-10 I have come they may have life and have it abundantly 2 Corinthians 12-9 my grace is sufficient for you my power is made perfect in weakness 2 Corinthians 4 verse 14 he who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence John 6-37 all that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out John 10-28

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hands friends these are the promises that God has given us greater promises yes than even what he gave to Abraham we are in some ways the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and yet God has these greater promises for us how do we know that God will be faithful to us the way he was in the past the way he was to Abraham well friends we go back to the very center of the Christian faith we go back to the very center of all that it means to know and believe God and the God of this Bible it's about Jesus Christ and about his life and his death and his resurrection we look to the cross and the empty tomb and we see

[26 : 39] God has been faithful to do all that was needed to fulfill all of those promises for us when we look to those things we are certain of his love because he came and offered his life for our salvation we look and we see that his death for us because of his perfect sinlessness and because of his willing sacrifice was perfectly sufficient for us that there's nothing else that we need to do for our sins to be forgiven we look at the empty tomb and we know that today we worship a savior who is not an idea or a character in a book but who is a living God who today is active seeking us out calling us to him fellowshiping with him when we look at the cross and the resurrection we know that sin and death and sorrow and evil do not have the last word in our lives or in the world because Jesus has conquered them we look at the cross and we know that God has the power to deliver us at any time we know that God's love has never been dependent on our goodness but on his merciful initiation to us friends we look at the cross and we look at the empty tomb and we see that Jesus is enough

Jesus is enough for our lives today and tonight and whatever it is that is causing doubt for you that God will come through that God will be faithful that he will be with you and the promises that he has given to you that he will carry them through perfectly without fail this is what Genesis 25 1 through 11 wants us to remember that is not the walk of faith is not because our faith is so great but it is because the faithfulness of God is so unbelievably secure that we then are drawn to give our faith and our trust to him and to walk in the footsteps of Abraham and to walk a walk of faith not because we think we can get to where we need to go but because we are putting ourselves in the hands of one who has shown himself to be perfectly faithful so friends this is where

Abraham leaves us looking at God and meditating on his faithfulness and trusting that he has been will be good to us and so we can trust him and so as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 so we don't lose heart though our outer self is wasting our way our inner self is being renewed day by day for these light and momentary afflictions whatever our trials of life preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen the trials the challenges the pain the evil the hurt the brokenness of this world but looking to the things that are unseen God sovereignly ruling it over his love shown to us at the cross the reality of his power at work in us and in the Holy Spirit we look to the things that are not to the things that are seen but are unseen for the things that are seen are transient and they will pass away but the things that are unseen these are eternal let's pray together

Lord as we consider this odd little story about the death of Abraham and the end of his life Lord we pray you would help us to take hold of these signs in even the telling of this story to remind us of what a faithful God you are and Lord that we would respond tonight in faith Lord if some of us tonight have been wrestling with faith and doubt Lord I pray tonight that you would meet them meet us and remind us and call us Lord to a life of faith by reminding us of how faithful you are Lord I pray if there is anyone here tonight who has not put their faith in Jesus Christ who looks at the cross and didn't think that was for them till tonight Lord that they would consider putting their faith tonight that Jesus which died for them to save them from their sin

Lord I pray for all of us that we would learn to walk with our eyes fixed on you oh Lord the faithful one Lord we pray these things in Jesus name amen