

Hope in the Promise

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[0:00] God, we thank you for your word, though it was written thousands of years ago, Lord. It's timeless truths inspired by you, by your spirit.

Lord, speak to us, instruct us, and draw us closer to you. We pray that you help us with the proper posture of humility to approach your word, so that we may encounter you, hear your voice, and be transformed into the likeness of your son, Jesus Christ.

It's in his precious name we pray, amen. When my first daughter, Ine, was two, she saw a kitty cake, ice cream cake in Star Market, and she really, really wanted it.

And so we promised her, hey, when you turn three, birthday, we will get you that Hello Kitty cake. And her birthday was still six months away or so, so we thought to ourselves, surely she will forget in the span of the six months, and she's not going to ask us again.

But she remembered, and she actually rehearsed that promise in her mind every day, pretty much, saying that, oh, when it's my birthday, you can give me the Hello Kitty cake. When it's my birthday, you can give me the Hello Kitty cake.

[1:10] So she remembered, and so on her third birthday, we did get her that exact Hello Kitty cake. Thankfully, it was still there, and she was delighted. And she hasn't, I mean, as a kid, experienced too many broken promises yet.

So she really believes, right? When someone makes a promise to her, she knows and she believes that that's going to happen. And the latest promise that she's been reminding us of daily is that when she turns four, she gets to have not just one, but two vitamin gummies, because that's what it says on the nutritional value chart, right?

And so now she's been asking for that nearly every time we give her the gummies. Her eyes get wide, and she'll look at me and say, really, matter of fact, with a teacher-like voice, she'll say, oh, but when I turn four, I get to have two.

So I'm like, yeah, you get to have two when you turn four. And so there's something that, as Christians, we can learn from children's example, right? The childlike faith, right?

The humility, right? The unqualified trust and dependence on her parents, and really thinking that, yeah, they promised this to me. They're going to give this to me, right?

[2:17] If we had that as Christians, if we really believed God in us, then we would pray, and we would pray persistently, and we'd expect God to answer, and we'd try to keep a record of the promise that He has made, because we believe that He will answer those promises.

And that's what we see here happening in these chapters. God had made these promises to Abraham. He promised him a place for them. He promised him a progeny, and we see both of those things, a place and a progeny, a place and a people, fulfilled in chapters 23 and 24, respectively.

And then chapter 25 is kind of a summary of all these promises. I'm not really going to cover that in depth, but you could read that as well. And altogether in these chapters, God's teaching us that we can hold on to the promises of God, as Abraham did, because God has steadfast love and faithfulness toward His people.

So we can hold on to His promises because God is steadfast in His love and faithful toward His people. So let's go to Genesis 23 first to see how God fulfills His promise of a place.

Genesis 23 begins with the notice of Sarah's death in verses 1 to 2. It says, And her husband Abraham wants to give her a worthy burial, so he approaches the Hittites in verse 4 and makes this proposal.

[3:47] I am a sojourner and foreigner among you. Give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. This is really a revealing statement because

Abraham has now been in the land of Canaan for 62 years.

And for 62 years, he's been holding on to God's promise that he and his progeny are going to inherit this land. And still he is a sojourner, a foreigner. And that's how he identifies himself in the presence of these people.

And this was true. Because even though Abimelech, as we saw earlier, had granted him access to the well, I mean, he has the well, but he has no land property to his name, right?

Even though he had given the permission to freely dwell in the land of Canaan, he doesn't still own any of the property. So that's why he approaches the Hittites. And this is a formal gathering.

It says it's at the city gates. City gates are where the elders who are leading the town sit together to make important decisions. And conduct businesses. And so here is Abraham presenting the case.

[4 : 50] And in verse 10, he asks for a property among you for a burying place. Or he asks for it in this first few verses. Now, notice that he's not just asking for permission to bury his wife, but he's asking for the ability to purchase, to buy a place for himself.

And the word possession that's used here is the same word that was used in Genesis 17, 8 to refer to God's promise of an everlasting possession. It's the same word.

So we're about to witness whether God's promise to him of this possession will be fulfilled. And the Hittites respond in a very considerate way, but they're also very calculating.

You can see that in verse 6. Hear us, my Lord. You are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.

Well, that's really nice, right? You could bury your wife in the best of our graves. But notice what they leave out. They intentionally omit the fact that of any mention of property and possession.

[5 : 53] Abraham asked for a place he can buy and own for himself to bury his wife so that it can be guaranteed for the future generations that she'll be safe there. But they don't mention that. They say, no, just bury them among our tombs.

That's what they're saying. And now Abraham is not ready to give up yet, so he presses them and surely avoids that omission and makes a second more specific proposition in verses 8 to 9.

If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns. It is at the end of his field.

For the full price, let me give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place. You could see Abraham's concern to own the place. Because if he receives the place for free, in the future if disputes arise and someone wants to reclaim the land, if Ephron wants to reclaim the land, he could potentially lose it or Ephron could make demands of him because now he's indebted to him.

So he wants a secure place. He wants to own the place, a property and possession. And so he insists on that. Now then Ephron responds in this way, I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it.

[7 : 07] In the sight of the sons of my people, I give it to you. Bury your dead. And Abraham says, but if you will hear me, I give the price of the field. Accept it from me that I may bury my dead there. And so Ephron is kind of pushing the corner.

And so now he finally ascends in a way because he says in verse 15, My lord, listen to me. A piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver. What is that between you and me?

Bury your dead. So in other words, he's saying, We're both so rich and we're both so close. What is 400 shekels? Don't worry about it. Just take it, right? That's what he's saying. And this is actually, But the fact that he casually inserts the actual full price of the land shows that he's not really interested in giving away for free.

If you're going to take it, and if you're insisting on having to own it, then you better pay me is what he's saying. And that's actually the very typical way in the ancient Near East they made transactions. So it's kind of a semblance of, you preserve a semblance of cordiality and relationship by saying, Oh, you have it for free, but if you're really, I want to know it costs this much.

And then they say, Okay, well, fine. And so Abraham doesn't miss a beat. So he goes, Okay. Then he pays the amount. He counts the money, or rather he weighs the silver in verse 16. And this is an official transaction.

[8 : 22] And the fact that this is a public official transaction is repeated throughout this passage from phrases like in the hearing of the Hittites or in the presence of the Hittites. It's repeated five

times throughout this passage to show that this is that momentous time when Abraham finally comes to own property in the land of Canaan.

And notice how specific verses 17 to 18 is. So the field of Ephron in Mechopolim, east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout this whole area, was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites before all who went in at the gate of the city.

And this is important because even though the occasion for this purchase is Sarah's death and her burial, the whole narrative is really taken over by this interaction with the Hittites and Abraham. And the narrator focuses on that intentionally because this shows God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to Abraham of a place. And notice it's near Mamre, right?

That's the place where God had given Abraham and Sarah the promise that in a year's time, you will have Isaac, a son. That's also the place when Abraham, when he first entered the land of Canaan in chapter 13, 18, he built an altar and staking out the land spiritually, saying, this is the land God has promised to me.

[9 : 48] So it's a place that's really dear to Abraham and Sarah's heart. And that's the place God first gives to Abraham to own. I hope you can appreciate the tenacity and the perseverance of Abraham and Sarah because it's not easy to be an immigrant.

It's not easy to be a foreigner, right? Every day you live, right, you have to learn an unfamiliar language, get used to unfamiliar customs, and they have to live with pervasive reminders everywhere in the culture and the society of their foreignness with the lagging doubt in the back of their minds that they don't quite belong.

And Abraham lived with this for 62 years in this land of Canaan, and he stayed because he was holding on to the promises of God. And that's why he's held up as an example of faith in Hebrews 11.

It says in Hebrews 11, 9 to 10, by faith Abraham went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land living in tents with Isaac and Jacob heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God. And it says later in verses 13 to 16 of the same chapter of Hebrews, 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.

[11 : 11] They desired 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. The author of Hebrews is making a typological connection here between the promised land, the physical land of Canaan, and heaven, the dwelling place of God.

And he's saying that this land of Canaan that was promised to Abraham was a type, it's a prefigurement of the ultimate promised land, which is to dwell with God in heaven. And as Christians, then we are called to live as sojourners and foreigners on earth, looking ahead to that promised land, holding on to the promises of God in the same way Abraham did.

Now, what does that look like for us today, right, to hold on to the promises of God? Well, the world tells us, right, that wealth will bring us happiness, that we should accumulate more so that we could spend more, so that we could be more happy, right?

But God tells us in Matthew 6, 19 to 20, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal.

So then we don't place our hope in the riches of this life, but as Christians, what it looks like for us to hold on to the promises of God is we live generously and we give sacrificially and we store up treasures in heaven, holding on to what is promised to us in Christ, our eternal inheritance, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us.

[12 : 45] That's what it looks like for a Christian to live holding on to the promises of God. Some of us watch what we eat, exercise regularly, count the calories so that we can be healthy or look good or both, right?

And it's a good thing to take care of our body because we're called by God to be stewards of our bodies because they're temples of the Holy Spirit, as Paul writes in Corinthians. But we do much more than that, right?

Because our hope is not in this world but in the world to come. So that's why 1 Timothy 4, 78 tells us, Train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

So what does it look like to hold on to the promises of God as Christians is we tend to not just to our bodies but to our souls, right? So we examine ourselves and we repent of sins in our lives and we share them.

We surround ourselves with mentors, disciples, pastors, friends, and encouragers. In short, we surround ourselves with the church so that we can continue to grow in our likeness to Christ. We train ourselves for godliness by cultivating godly habits and rhythms that foster humility and holiness.

[14:06] That's what it looks like to hold on to the promises of God. Some people live and die for the approval of other people, right? They work hard in school to earn good grades so they can win the approval of their parents or teachers.

Or they play really hard and party and drink so they can win the approval of their peers. They work overtime and grovel before their superiors so they can win their approval and maybe win a promotion.

But Colossians 3, 23, 24 tells us, Whatever you do, work heartily. Ask for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are serving the Lord Christ. So what does it look like for Christians to work and to live with the promises of God in hand, holding on to the promises of God? We work as unto the Lord and we look to Him and make Him our hope for the inheritance that we have, the reward that we will receive, not men.

And we have a wonderful example of that here, chapter 23, in Abraham, holding on to the promises of God. And then in chapter 24, so we saw in 23 the promise of place fulfilled and in 24 we see the promise of progeny, of people beginning to be fulfilled.

[15:23] And as he nears, so Abraham is now nearing his death and as he does so, he's thinking about his future, his child, his Isaac, his son. And he makes charge to his most reliable servant in verses 2 to 4, chapter 24.

Put your hand under my thigh that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred and take a wife for my son, Isaac.

It's a, here we see, this is another example of Abraham holding on to the promises of God and the reason why is this, because land of Canaan, there's probably dozens of women, right, who are eligible that Isaac can marry and Isaac is an heir of a very, very wealthy and powerful man in Abraham and it would have been very easy for him to find a wife in the land of Canaan.

But why does Abraham charge his servant to make sure he doesn't take a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites? And we see the reason, the rationale for this in the later expression of God's law through Moses.

In Exodus 34, verses 13 to 16, God commands Israelites, don't take the daughters of Canaanites for your sons, lest their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

[16:47] That's the rationale, right? To intermarry with non-Jews, people who did not have faith, was to risk apostasy, to leave God, to risk faithlessness to God himself.

And because Abraham knew his identity, because he knew his call, that his mission was to be a blessing to the nations and he could only be a blessing to the nations if he's faithful to the Lord God and make sure that generation after generation his progeny are faithful to him.

And because of that, he charges his servant to take a wife for his son from his kindred. And we find, you know, New Testament counterparts for this as well, right?

In 2 Corinthians 16, Paul tells us equally yoked with unbelievers. In 1 Corinthians 7, 39, it tells us, right, he tells us to marry only in the Lord, right?

It's the same rationale. It's not because, you know, God hates those people. It's not because, you know, God doesn't care about those, but because God cares so much about people, so much about him.

[17:51] He's jealous for your affection and your relations. That's why this, with such severity, right? Abraham charges his servant Isaac. And servant is doubtful that he can accomplish this.

You know, they live kind of far, you know, from where his kindred live. You know, and you think that this woman's going to come marry Isaac whom she has never seen and Abraham whose wealth she has never seen.

Do you think she's going to come all the way over here and say, what if she says she doesn't want to come? And so, the servant's trying to find because he's making an oath with Abraham. And Abraham is even more severe in the way he responds to it.

He says, see to it, verse 6 to 8, that you do not take my son back there. Right? And he says, if the woman's not willing to follow him, then he's released from his oath.

Right? So, the reason why he does this is because he's holding onto, once again, the promises of God. The land of Canaan is placed God had promised for them. So, don't, whatever happens, take Isaac back where he came from.

[18:51] That's what he's saying. And so, in verse 10, the servant complies. He takes the oath. And the oath, interestingly, is you put your hand under the thigh.

Right? That's, in the ancient Near East, people held onto sacred objects in order to, you know, make their oath much more severe and, and, I guess, it's that way of showing reverence to that oath.

And so, this is a euphemism. So, under the thigh, really, literally, probably, it's referring to under the genitals. Right? So, it's considered sacred because it's considered source of life.

And for Abraham, this is particularly significant because he's circumcised. Right? So, these genitals not only represent source of life. For him, it represents the covenant of God. And so, under that, the servant makes this oath.

And he goes in verse 10. He says, then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from the master. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

[19:55] Now, this is a, the reason why he's taking so much stuff is because in this call, they had what is called the bright price. Right? And, and you pay, a bright price to the wife's family.

And then, and eventually, that, that wealth, the bright price that the wife's family received will be passed on to the wife when she got married as a dowry. Right? And that, it's easy for us to, you know, look at that and, and, and think, oh, how primitive, why do they do that?

They're treating women like property. What's going on? Right? It's, in this day and age, in this culture, it's, women do not work. Right? And they're working at home.

Right? And they don't get, have paid jobs. And so, if they happen to be so unfortunate to come across a dud of a husband who neglects her and, and abandons her or divorces her, she has no source of livelihood, especially if her, her parents have passed.

And so, dowry ensures, dowry is guaranteed to the wife. It doesn't belong to the couple. And that ensures that the wife has a source of livelihood, even if she were to come across a bad husband. Not only that, the bright price ensures that the families are more tied collectively together, and it dissuades, you know, frivolous, you know, promiscuous suitors from coming and saying, oh, hey, I'll marry your wife and, and then I will marry this woman and marry her and then abuse her and leave her.

[21:12] Right? You can't do that. So, the substantial requirement of the bright price discouraged, you know, frivolous suitors and encouraged and made sure that only serious suitors who we want, intended to marry and keep, stay married, came to, to court these women.

And so, the servant goes and he takes 10 camels. So, this is a suggestion of great wealth of Abraham. Camels are like the Porsche and Ferraris of their day, right? Really expensive and rare. And the fact that he has 10 of them he can spare along with his servant is a sign of great, great wealth.

So, he leaves. And then, once he leaves, he, when he arrives at his destination, he prays to God first, asking God for help and he devises an ingenious test.

He prays that the woman who comes out to water, who not only offers him drink, but also offers to water all his camels, should be the one that God has appointed, the word is used, for Isaac to marry.

Now, at first, this might seem like, that's not too difficult. I mean, if I were in that station, I think I would have done that. And especially considering the ancient hospitality, you might think this, anyone, maybe the first woman who comes would do that.

[22 : 23] But this is actually not the case because it's really easy for the woman to offer Abraham a drink. I mean, not Abraham. Abraham served in a drink. But it's actually very difficult for the woman to water all the camels because how many camels did Abraham's servant bring?

He brought 10 camels and the camels are known to be animals of burden in the desert. Why? Because they're so good at going without water for many days. And if a camel goes for several days without water, as they would have done in this case, they are so parched, it says that one camel can drink as much as 25 gallons of water.

25 times 10, 250 gallons of water. And a container of that time would be what? At max, a few gallons. And if you look down later, it says that it's a, verse 16, it tells us that it's a well that you have to walk down to to fill with water and you walk up three gallons.

Or how many trips is that? Right? 80 trips to the well? This is a lot of work. And even if we, you know, offer more conservative estimates and say that camels were not completely parched, this is still very, very, very labor intensive.

So he takes a woman of great, exceptional hospitality and kindness to offer that. So he's devised a pretty stiff test. And he prays that God will make this woman do this.

[23 : 44] And before the servant could even finish uttering his prayer, it says that our female, our female protagonist comes on the scene in verse 15. Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

I love the way it's phrased. This reveals the graciousness, the eagerness of our heavenly father to answer prayers according to his will. Because God said about his people in Isaiah 65, 24, Before they call, I will answer.

While they are yet speaking, I will hear. That's what we see here God doing. That's God's heart to answer our prayers when we pray according to his will for our good and for God's glory.

He's not reluctant. He's not loath to answer our prayers. And when we do that, before we're even done speaking, he says, Yes, I want to give this to you. Yes, that's his heart, the father's heart for us.

If we only believe that simple truth, it'd make us so much more eager to pray and transform our life in interaction with him. And these next few verses are one of the most exciting passages in the whole book of Genesis, just brimming over excitement and anticipation.

[24 : 57] And by the way, there are some very helpful tips here for singles who are looking for marriageable partners, so pay attention too. Verse 15, it tells us that this young woman's name is Rebekah who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

Of course, that's the most important part of this description because that's the express reason for which Abraham's servant was sent out to find someone among his kindred, someone who shares the faith of the Lord God.

And then, secondly, we find here in verse 16, the young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known. Now, this is not a requirement, but it's a nice bonus, right, if the someone you want to marry is very attractive to you.

And so that's what we find here. And she's also chaste. It says she's a maiden whom no man had known. So she's a virgin. And in verse 17, the servant then carries out his plan and then asks Rebekah if she would offer him some drink.

And the prayer that the servant prayed is fulfilled in exactly the way he had prayed it. So Rebekah not only offers him a drink, but offers to water all of his camels.

[26 : 07] And she is described as being exceptionally industrious and diligent because twice in verse 18 and 20, it says that Rebekah did her work quickly. So she's an amazing woman, it seems.

And so by the time Rebekah is done, the servant is quite confident that this is the woman that God had appointed for Isaac. And so he then showers her with gifts and then questions her so that he is taken back to her house to meet and get the approval of her family.

Now, when he arrives there, he's greeted by Laban, who is Rebekah's brother. And he says this in verse 30, As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms.

You see where the emphasis is here, what he's looking at. And heard the words of Rebekah, his sister, thus the man spoke to me. He went to the man and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring.

Remember the camels, that's the Ferraris and the porch. So this is a beautiful portrait. It's a wonderful portrait of Laban. So you have Rebekah here who is described as really selfless and Laban here is as selfish as can be.

[27 : 16] The only thing he's noticing, he's not trying to test the character of the man or asking questions. He's looking at, oh, he's got lots of bling bling and he's got this nice bride that he's sitting next to, right? And so when they, and then he offers his hospitality as a result.

But when they sit down for a meal, the servant is very urgent. And he makes this proposition. He says, I am Abraham's servant, verses 34 and following.

The Lord has greatly blessed my master and he has become great. He has given him flocks and herds and silver gold, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys, right? So this is the part that interests Laban.

And so he mentions it shrewdly. And he's very smart. He says in verse 35, and Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when she was old. Now this is an important point because it's, you can remember Nahor, right, is Abraham's brother and Rebecca is his granddaughter, right?

And Isaac is Abraham's son. So they could potentially think that there's a huge age gap here. And then so they met, the family might be thinking to themselves, oh, well, our daughter is a beautiful maiden, very attractive.

[28 : 28] Why should we give her hand in marriage to this shrivelly old man, right? And so he says, no, Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when she was old. So this is a young son, okay?

She had him when she was old. And not just that, he mentions that the Lord has, the fact that he mentions that he's the only son is significant because that means, and he mentions that Isaac is the exclusive heir to all of Abraham's inheritance, right?

So at first, this may have come across as a little bit, like if you say Abraham is so blessed, why does he only have one son? So that could be a fact that's kind of a deterrent for them. But then the servant turns that around and uses it to his advantage to say, oh, ha ha, you thought that was a bad thing, but what turns out to be his loss is your gain because he's going to get everything Abraham has, right?

So this is a very shrewd servant. No wonder Abraham entrusted everything he had to him. And so he does that and then more importantly, he gets the main purpose of his journey across in verses 37 to 41, telling the family that he has come to find a wife for Isaac among his kindred.

And he slips in the fact that, you know, if the woman does not come with him, the deal is off. He's going to take his proposition elsewhere. And so he's kind of said everything he needed to say.

[29 : 46] And then the final conclusion in verse 49 can't be any stronger. Now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me.

And if not, tell me. Then I may turn to the right hand or to the left. Right? He says, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master. So in other words, if you're going to show kindness to humanity, if you're going to fulfill your obligation as Abraham's kindred, well then, there's only one right answer you can give me.

Right? And not only that, steadfast love and faithfulness are two of the most frequently mentioned attributes of God. So he's saying, in essence, well God's behind this.

God's shown steadfast love and faithfulness. So if you don't want to obey God, if you don't want to follow His will, then you can decline this offer. So this is a really strong, you know, he's pressing his deal. And so, of course, they can only say one thing.

So they say, verses 50 and 51, the thing has come from the Lord. We cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebecca is before you. Take her and go and let her be the wife of your master's son as the Lord has spoken.

[30 : 53] It's a really good example even though they're not the most godly people, it seems, but they still believe that if the Lord has spoken, they must follow it. Right? When the Lord has spoken, when God's word says something, it's not a time to debate, say this is bad or good.

No, it's time to obey and to submit to His will. But later, as the servant hastes to leave the family, maybe they're starting to second guess this abrupt proposal and agreement.

Maybe they want to, you know, change some of the terms of the agreement so they want to buy some time so they try to delay their departure. And because this tension builds and now this is the climax of this narrative and they ask, they decide to bring Rebecca in.

Let's ask her. Let's make her decide since she's the one that's going. Verse 58, and they called Rebecca and said to her, will you go with the man? And as they wait with bated breath, she says, I will go.

And that simple, decisive statement, I will go, aligns her with Abraham and not with her family because it's Abraham in chapter 12 who was commanded by God to go from your country, from your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

[32 : 05] and now Rebecca proves herself to be in that promised line and connected to Abraham's family and she says, I will go and she too leaves her country and her kindred and her father's house to be part of God's plan.

And so, it's not surprising that the blessing that she receives as she departs exactly mirrors the blessing that God had given Abraham in Genesis chapter 22, verse 17.

And so, she leaves and then she meets Isaac and verse 67 is so tender and intimate. It says, Then Isaac brought her in to the tent of Sarah, his mother, and took Rebecca and she became his wife and he loved her.

Biblically speaking, loving the person you marry is a far greater concern than marrying the person you love. Right? The Bible spends much more time talking about loving the person you marry. So, saying that, you know, we've fallen out of love and using that as a basis for divorce, breaking up a marriage is a completely unbiblical answer. A feeling of love can be cultivated and deepened with persevering acts of love.

[33 : 20] Right? That's what Christ calls us. And we do this by daily finding our satisfaction in God, not in our spouses. Right? Because if we, if we demand our spouse is what God can only fulfill, then we will be disgruntled and dissatisfied.

We do this by daily considering our spouse better than ourselves. Right? Instead of fixating on their faults and foibles, right? We decide to focus instead on their final traits.

And we choose to love the person we married. And that's what happens here with Isaac. Rebecca became his wife and he loved her. And not only is Rebecca blessed throughout this, through this marriage, Isaac is blessed beyond measure.

It says, Isaac was comforted after his mother's death by his marriage to Rebecca. Right? This is such a, it's kind of a minor detail, but isn't that amazing what kind of character of God this reveals for us?

Right? God's right now fulfilling this cosmic plan which will be fulfilled in Jesus to redeem all, redeem humanity, to redeem people for himself. And while he is unfolding and implementing this cosmic plan, he's also taking care of Isaac because he's mourning his mother's death.

[34 : 31] He comforts him with Rebecca. God cares about our brokenness, our suffering, the small things that we might deem unimportant in the grand scale of things.

He cares about those things even though he's the God of the universe. And so we saw in chapter 23 God's fulfillment of place. And here we see God's fulfillment of progeny.

And at this point we might object, well, it's easy for Abraham to hold on to the promises of God because he's seen all kinds of, you know, evidences of God's faithfulness and his power, right? His wife, Sarah, gave birth to his son when she was 90 years old and menopausal. That's a miracle, right? So of course, Abraham could have faith and hold on to the promise, but what about us?

How can we hold on to the promises of God? What reason do we have to hold on and believe in the promises of God? The answer to this lies throughout this passage and the rationale, the basis, the reason for the fulfillment of God's promises in these passages is given in the repeated words, steadfast love and faithfulness.

[35 : 42] Right? In chapter 24, verses 12 to 14, when the servant is praying, asking God to give him success regarding finding Rebecca, he says twice, he calls upon God's steadfast love.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master. This is verse 27 also. After, right, after God's answer to his prayer, he says again, blessed be the Lord, God of my master Abraham who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master.

And then again, in verse 48, when it says, the God of my master Abraham who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. Right way can be translated true way, faithful way.

It's the same word. Again, loving, it's a steadfast love, faithfulness. Steadfast love, faithfulness. That is the basis for God's fulfillment of his promises to Abraham. And what is steadfast love?

Steadfast, it's unchanging. It harkens back to the gracious, unconditional promises that God made to Abraham. And it's the overflow, it's the overflow of God's loving kindness that finds its basis not in our worthiness or our merit, not our deservingness, but on the fact that God is generous and giving. [36 : 55] Do you know that this is the word that's translated in the New Testament as grace, undeserved favor? Do you realize that we don't deserve God's love? We have not earned an ounce of it, yet God, because of his, solely because of his bounty, his generosity, the overflow of his loving kindness, he has steadfast, unchanging love towards people.

That's steadfast love, grace. And the word faithfulness, it's also translated as truth. It's a reference to God's faithfulness to his character.

He's always true to who he is. He never changes. He's faithful. And these two ideas is combined. Faithfulness is what lies behind sometimes the New Testament Greek translation of the word truth. And this is what's behind John's statement in John 1, 17, where he says, the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Steadfast love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus is ultimate fulfillment and embodiment of God's grace and truth, his steadfast love and faithfulness.

[38 : 10] And in Jesus, then, we have a far more compelling reason to hold on to our promises in God than Abraham ever had. Because Jesus came and he died for us.

He was the perfect son of God, holy one, yet he died for our sins. He died in our place. That's grace, loving kindness, steadfast love that we did not deserve but poured out for us.

Yet God was faithful to who he is. He's just. We were sinners, we were rebels, and we deserve to be punished and God had to punish if he had, if he's going to be faithful to himself because he's just, because he's holy.

And so as I say, right, the proverbial, the proverbial, unstoppable force of God's grace meets the immovable object of his justice, his truth.

And that's when the cross happens. That's the beauty and the paradox of the cross where Jesus dies as our substitute so that even though we deserve to die, God unleashes his punishment, meets out his judgment, not on us but on our substitute, Jesus, his son.

[39 : 20] So he absorbs the punishment himself. And that's the reason why we can have eternal life with him if we believe in him, repent of our sins and believe in him instead of death.

And it's when we look to Jesus, his face, that's when we see steadfast love. It's when we look to Jesus, that's when we see faithfulness. And when we look to him and hold those two things together, that's when we can live as Christians who are holding on to the promises of God.

So let's pray together. God, God, it's so mind-boggling to think that you yourself have made a way for us to come to you.

Even though we were your enemies, even though we rejected you, even though we sinned against you, Lord, thank you for your steadfast love. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Thank you for your grace and truth that abounds for us. Help us to live in light of that today, this week, so that we grow in our love and affection for you and in our faith and trust in you.

[40 : 46] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.