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SERMON TITLE: **Sticking with God for a Positive Outcome**
SCRIPTURE: **Genesis 24**
DATE **August 14, 2022**
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

What does a man think of as he nears life's end? How does he consider the legacy he leaves to his heirs? We all listen closely to such important words.

Abraham was seventy-five years old when he initially heard the voice of God who spoke a promise. He trusted that promise and took a radical risk. He left his home; his country; familiar gods and surroundings and began following this new God who speaks and guides.

He has come to the end of his life and he is thinking how he wants to leave his estate—this estate is not your typical money and possessions, but a much more enduring one—it is **an estate of faith**, the wealth of God's promises—some fulfilled (Isaac, the promised son arrived when Abraham was 100); and those promises yet to come (descendants too numerous to count and the Promised Land). Abraham's legacy would also be quantifiable—vast livestock, monetary wealth, and the small piece of land where Sarah was buried.

The death of his wife made him think of what really mattered to him. And what mattered to him was living a life of faith.

Sarah had left their homeland with him. She joined him in the long-awaited promise, even when twenty-five years passed with NO ANSWER. She laughed with the thought of having a baby at the age of 90, and she mothered that child until he was thirty-seven years old.

Sarah's death flooded Abraham's mind with what really mattered to him.

When your spouse dies, it makes you assess what is important; what you want to do moving forward. That event, especially after a long and happy marriage, spurs you on to decisions based on how you have lived. To Abraham, it was his faith. Abraham wanted to pass on his faith to his son. Abraham wanted that promise from God to come to fruition. It became THE THING that mattered the most.

He would have to trust God with this. It would only be God who could make his request happen. Here's the story. Gen 24:1-8:

Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, . . . "Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh. Swear by the LORD that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. Go instead to

my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

Now the servant, even though he has lived in this family's compound, did not have the same faith of Abraham. He had not walked with him from the beginning. He had not experienced what it means to wait years for a promise on faith alone. He did not know what it means to pray and listen and hope and wait and pray again. He was looking at the JOB. Go find a wife. So he asked:

"But what if I can't find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?"

He wanted to take the easy road! But faith takes . . . well, **FAITH!**

When do you compromise living by faith? Is there a waiting period and faith "expires" if not answered in a particular timeframe? This guy was pragmatic. He thought—there's got to be an easier way than faith!

Abraham had fifty-seven years of experience with the God of Heaven now. He was seasoned, going through so many experiences of trying to solve problems himself resulting in utter failure versus gaining victories! What do you do when obstacles come? Abraham's answer to his servant's question was immediate:

"No! Be careful **never** to take my son there. For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give **this land** to my descendants. He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a wife there for my son. If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there."

There's the promise. Then there's the concrete reality of the son, Isaac.

It's like this. Jesus told many people, "I am going to be condemned, suffer, and die. **But do not worry. After three days I will be raised again.**" The promise is predicted by Jesus. The concrete reality is that Jesus was indeed raised.

Thus, Abraham's faith did not wobble.

What would have happened if Isaac married someone from the surrounding local culture? He would have been assimilated into that surrounding culture. END OF PROMISE. 😊

Abraham had such deep trust in the promise that **he insisted that God would help him**. He would seek the power and the loyalty of the promise-maker.

God had been loyal to his part of the deal. God had been loyal to save Isaac from being sacrificed. God had been loyal to this couple who left their country thirty-seven years ago to follow God's voice, even though not everything happened as they expected. Still, **FAITH TRIUMPHS** when you persist, thus . . . If you are a person of faith the Bible says:

"Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?" (2 Cor 6:14)

So, Abraham would not allow a Canaanite wife nor would he allow Isaac to leave the land.

If you are young, realize the advantage you give your marriage if you look for a Christian spouse. So seek the power of God and loyalty of the Promise-Maker to provide that for you.

Let's continue the story: Genesis 24:9-27

So the servant took an oath . . . and swore to follow Abraham's instructions. Then he loaded ten of Abraham's camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled. . . . It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water. "O LORD, God of my master, Abraham," he prayed. "Please give me success today, and show unfailing love to my master, Abraham. See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water. This is my request. I will ask one of them, 'Please give me a drink from your jug.' If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!' -- let her be the one you have selected as Isaac's wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unfailing love to my master."

This is the man's first stab at praying a solid prayer of faith.

Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah. Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin. . . . The servant said, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jug." "Yes, my lord, and I'll draw water for your camels, too." . . . The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the LORD had given him success in his mission. Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets for her wrists. . . . The man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. "Praise the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham," he said. "The LORD has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master's relatives."

Sometimes we just experience the incredible goodness of God.

An appropriate conclusion here might be, "God meant this outcome to be good." Notice, the answer was not generated by some sort of extraordinary faith effort on the part of the servant. He prays . . . he sees someone . . . he wonders . . . he lays out a test. "If she offers to water the camels too..." This might be simply a way of observing her personality. She is willing to serve. She is not self-focused. She has an agreeable, generous personality.

Do you look for those traits when you make alliances or new friends? Do you offer those traits to someone else?

This is a beautiful story because it shows God was way ahead of Abraham. Perhaps in the same way God has God's mind on YOU in 2022!

God planned for the promise to be extended to the next generation and the next, and so God was going to open the way.

So the servant was invited to the home of Rebekah's relatives and he told her father and brother the entire story. Then he closed the deal by saying, (vs. 49-51, 58-60, 67)

"So tell me -- will you or won't you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I'll know what to do next." Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The LORD has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say. . . . So they called Rebekah. "Are you willing to go with this man?" they asked her. And she replied, "Yes, I will go." So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham's servant and his men. They gave her this blessing as she parted: "Our sister, may you become the mother of many millions! May your descendants be strong and conquer the cities of their enemies."

(When they returned . . .) Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

Can we learn something from this story? This is a wonderful love story about sticking with God for a positive outcome in the best of times or the worst of times. Are you amazed at God's lovingkindness? We must grasp that it is the same toward you and me; God's constant presence; God's leading us forward to a future. God blesses those who have simple faith in Him.

God rewards those who are loyal to God. Faith is not conjuring up some outcome that we expect to happen, but pressing forward into hope.

You know the story of the boy who got a box of manure in his Christmas stocking, and he was ecstatic because, "I just know if there's manure, there's got to be a pony somewhere!"

When you have an obstacle, do you trust God's goodness this way?

And then do you express gratitude, whenever the answer comes: "*The LORD has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my need.*"

AMEN