

Water of Blessing in a Desert of Conflict

Genesis 26.12-33

We all falter in our journey of faith, but God's grace is greater! We are not bound by the failures of our past. Isaac stumbled, but didn't fall, and his maturing faith is shown in the face of opposition from the world. God's grace to us engenders graciousness to others.

- God's blessing may bring opposition from the world (12-22)
God may give his people material blessings (12-14a)

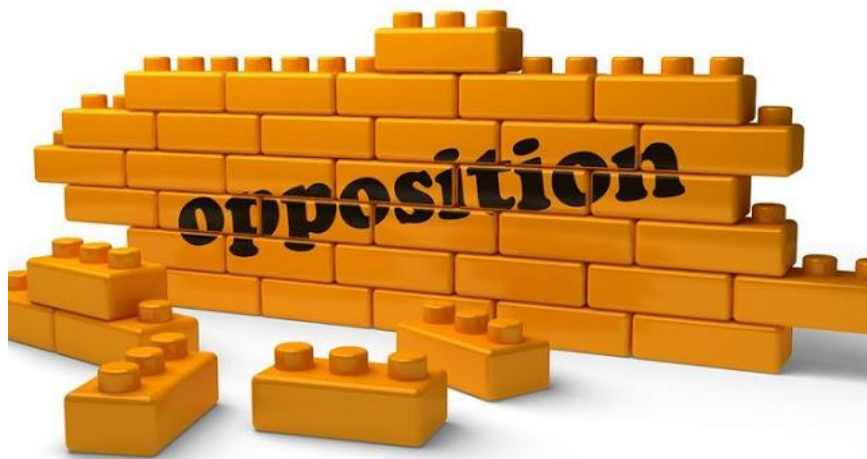
God's blessings may excite envy from the world (14b-22)

- Living by faith will lead to victory over opposition (23-33)
God's sure promises strengthen our faith (23-25)

The world may recognize God's blessing (26-33)

Lessons for times of Opposition

- Faith in God may bring material blessing – or not.
- Trust in God, not His blessings, when you face opposition.
- Living by faith may open the eyes of the world to God.



1. At the beginning of Genesis 26 a famine in the land led Isaac to move to Gerar. God blessed him amazingly there – so much so that he became *very wealthy* (13). Some Christians suggest this means that God wants *us* to be wealthy, and if we behave, He will bless us *materially*. Of course, this isn't what this (or any) biblical passage teaches! Did Isaac always 'behave'? Does God always bless *materially*? God *does* bless us, but most blessings, and certainly those that matter the most, are *spiritual*! What are some of our spiritual blessings in Christ? Why do we overlook spiritual blessings, and overemphasize material blessings?
2. God blessed Isaac materially, with the result that the Philistines envied him (14b) and made his life miserable. God blesses His children today with joy and peace; we might say they are 'rich' in these things. For this, many are persecuted. Why do ungodly people object to the blessings of God in others? Are Christians ever guilty of this?
3. The back-story to the opposition Isaac faced in Gerar is this: In Gen. 21, Abraham made a peace treaty with the Philistines, but after he died they broke the pact by filling in his wells (26.15). Isaac re-dug the wells and gave them the same names Abraham had, thus claiming rightful ownership. The Philistines in Gerar fought against this. Although he might have fought back, what does Isaac do (see verses 17, 20-22)? What lessons can we take from Isaac on how to respond to opposition?
4. God puts His stamp of approval on Isaac's actions by affirming His blessing in Beersheba (23-25). Abimelech, recognizing that God was blessing Isaac, and nothing he could do would stop it, came with his top officials to make peace. Although it was not long-lasting, the Philistines had their eyes opened to the power and provision of God. How can we apply Isaac's attitude in the face of opposition to our Christian witness today? How might 'living by faith' open the eyes of those around us who do not know of God's love and grace?

