



It has happened to all of us.

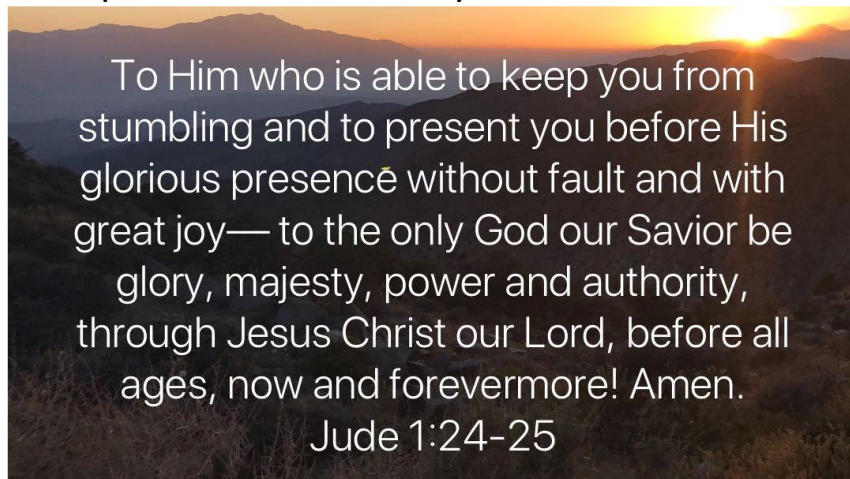
We've been somewhere walking and suddenly...we stumbled.

It happened to me in Colombia on a set of stairs.

Just as we can stumble in our walking, so also can we stumble spiritually.

In our passage for today we will read of the faithfulness of God to Isaac and Rebekah.

The Spirit of God had not yet moved Jude to write this blessing...



... but we shall see in Genesis 26 that Isaac and Rebekah repeatedly experienced God intervening in their lives to keep them from stumbling in order that he might present them before his glorious presence.

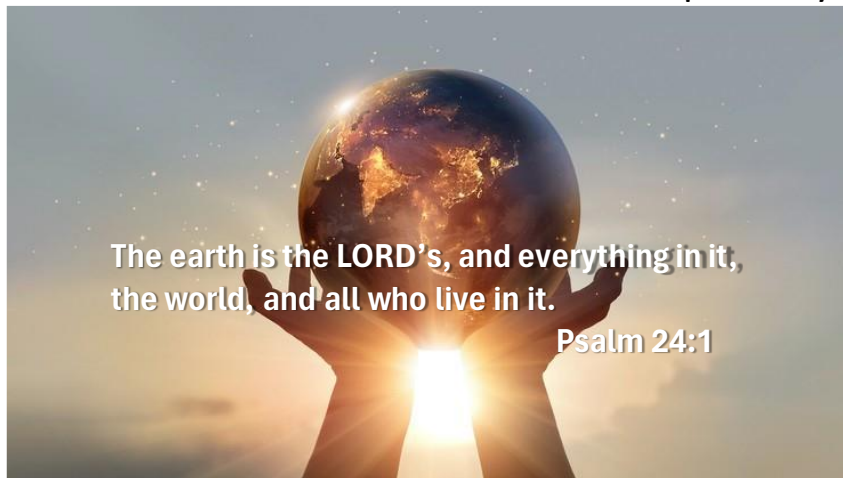
The last time we were in the book of Genesis was the long weekend in August, and then I was off on vacation.

I want to express my gratitude to Chris and Sean who preached while I was on vacation and to Tim and Erica and their girls who led in worship and to Kitae, Laura, Susan and Adrian who led in the prayers of the people. Thank you!

I appreciate your ministry to the church family, and many have told me how they were greatly blessed through you.

Genesis 26 begins with the statement –
v.1a - “Now there was a famine in the land...”

In the Bible the reader is reminded... repeatedly... that...



The Bible says that the creation declares the glory of God.
The Bible says that in and through the creation, the LORD reveals his power, wisdom, holiness and love.

The Scripture further tells us that God by his powerful word... sustains and controls all things, and that because of his mercy, He uses a climate event like a famine... to remind and to impress upon humanity that He is God and that all are accountable to Him.

In such events, like the famine in Genesis 26, God also actively trains his people to trust him, which involves them waiting for him and following where he leads them.

God's people are not immune from trouble, but neither are they forgotten by God in such times of trouble.

This is the promise of God to the nation of Israel, which is applicable to God's people in every generation and in every place:

"But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.'"

Isaiah 43:1-3a

In every situation, God is with his people.

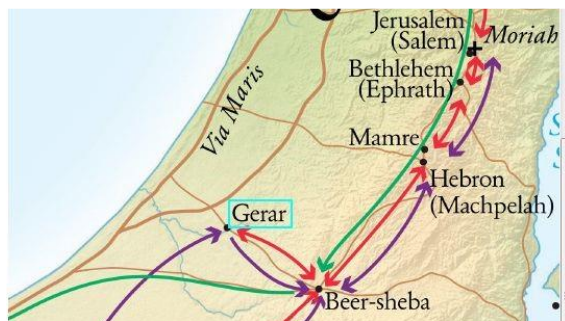
He is with us because He formed us.

He is with us because He redeemed us.

He is with us because He is our God and Savior.

He is with us because we belong to Him.

v.1b – "...and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar."



There in Gerar, the LORD appeared to Isaac and spoke with him.

The LORD did so in order to give Isaac and Rebekah directions as to what they were to do - **read v.2-5.**

Isaac received from the LORD a negative and a positive command.

- Do not go down to Egypt.
- Stay in this land.

Along with the clear direction to stay in the land of the Philistines, God affirmed to Isaac that he would be with him... and would bless him. But in what way would Isaac and Rebekah be blessed by the LORD?

Remember at this point, Isaac and Rebekah had no children. Genesis 25:21 states they had no children because Rebekah was barren.

And yet in spite of this, God promised to bless them with descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky... which meant... they would have children.

God further promised to bless their descendants by giving to them the land of Canaan.

But there was a third way in which God would bless Isaac and Rebekah. Look at v.4 again.

... through your **seed** (offspring)
all nations on earth will be blessed...

Genesis 26:4

This word... seed... is singular.

The significance of this particular word is made known in the book of Galatians.

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all nations on earth will be blessed...

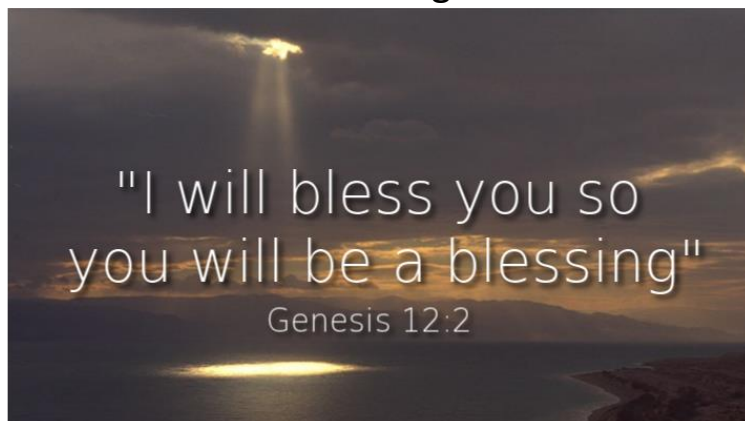
Genesis 26:4

The promises were spoken
to Abraham and his **seed**.
Scripture does not say "and to seeds"
meaning many people,
but "and to your seed,"
meaning **one person, who is Christ**.

Galatians 3:16

God would bless Isaac and Rebekah by counting them among the descendants of his Rescuer, Jesus the Christ, who would bless the nations of the earth.

Like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were blessed by God...
...in order to be a blessing.



We follow the same LORD and God, and He purposes to bless us... in order that we might be a blessing to others.

The grace of God flows into us, in order that the grace of God might flow out from us.

v.6 – So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

Isaac obeyed the LORD.

Our obedience is important to God.

But we see in the next number of verses that though Isaac obeyed God and stayed in Gerar, he did not trust God in a particular matter.

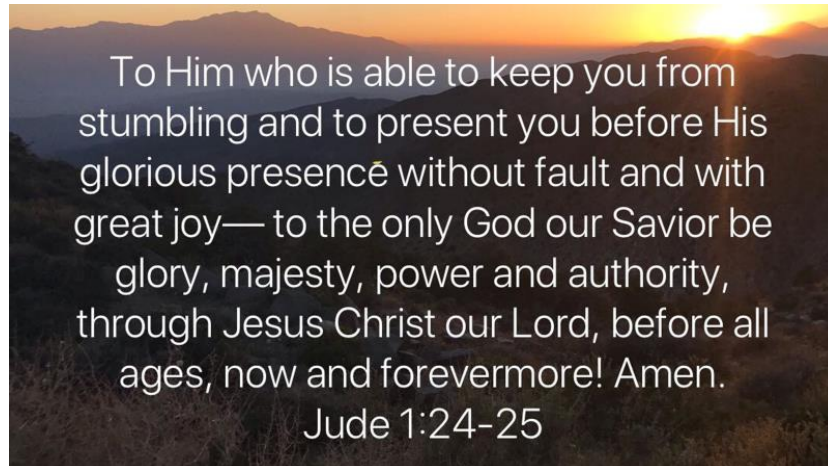
Isaac trusted God for the LORD's provision in a time of famine, but he did not trust God to protect him from the men of Gerar... whom Isaac feared would desire his wife... and who would then kill him in order to take her as their own.

It was this fear that compelled Isaac to lie – **read v.7.**

For a long time, it seemed like Isaac's lie worked.

But did it??

Or was it not the LORD who was with them, who protected them?



To keep Isaac from stumbling, the LORD intervened to expose Isaac's lie.

Read v.8.

God orchestrated the particular events that happened.

Is this not encouraging to read?

What God did then... is what he continues to do.

You and I are not an exception.

If we sin, the LORD will bring our sin into the light.

Yes, it will be embarrassing and painful when this happens.

But when the LORD does so... it is a great mercy.

The LORD keeps us from stumbling.

When confronted by King Abimelek, **v.9b**...Isaac could no longer hide behind his lie... and so he spoke the truth, **v.9c**...

In telling the truth, Isaac learned that in this matter, Abimilek was far more honorable than he had imagined, **v.10-11**.

The promise of God's presence is intended by the LORD to overcome our fear.

But God who is with us... is also committed to protect us from our own foolishness and the sin that so easily entangles us.

The LORD would have his people live in the light of His holiness, and to that end, He will take the necessary steps to bring that about.

There was a second way God was with Isaac and Rebekah; a second way in how he blessed them.

Read v.12-13, 28a.

In a time of famine, the crops that Isaac planted produced abundantly.
How abundantly?
A hundredfold.

The phrase at the end of verse 12 makes it clear why Isaac's harvest was so great.

It wasn't because Isaac was an amazing farmer.

It was because – **“the LORD blessed him.”**

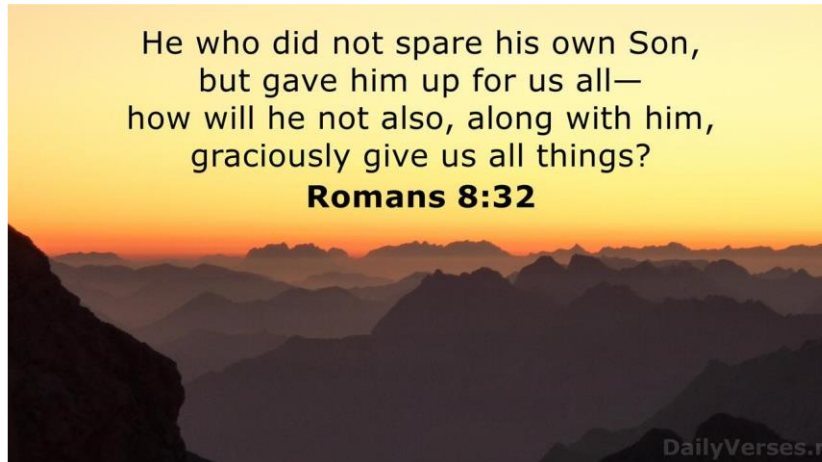
This is who God is.

He is the God who generously provides.

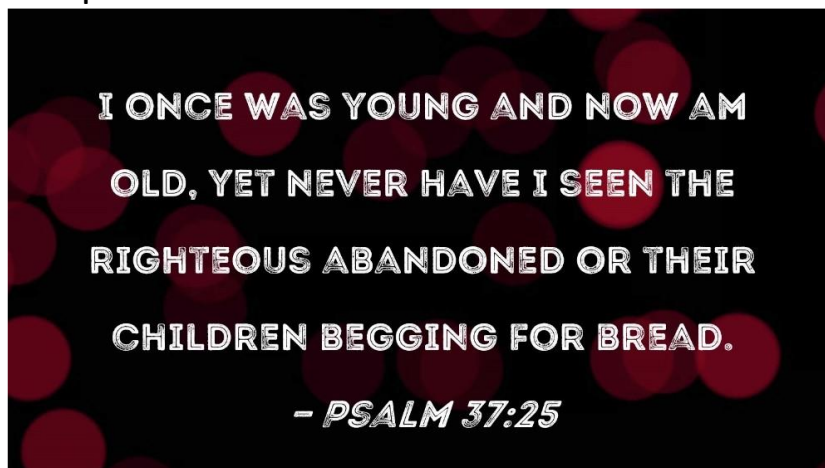
When his followers trust Him, and seek Him and His kingdom, Jesus promised in Matthew 6:33 – **“all these things will be given to you as well.”**

What were the “all these things?” Jesus specified:
Our food.
Our drink.
Our clothing.

A similar promise is made in the book of Romans....



The psalmist said...



In this present time, the LORD trains his people, not only to trust him, but to revel in his blessings and provision.

We... **“Praise God from whom all blessings flow...”**

We read in Genesis 26 of a third way in which God blessed Isaac and Rebekah – **v.14-23.**

Esek (dispute)
Sitnah (opposition)
Rehoboth (room)

God blessed Issac and Rebekah with water in a time of drought which had caused famine.

But with this blessing of water, they faced hostile opposition from the Philistines, not just once, but twice.

How did God keep Isaac from stumbling?

The LORD kept him from going to war over the wells his men had dug; wells that the Philistines twice claimed as their own.

The LORD influenced Isaac to walk away from those potential conflicts.

But for Isaac to do so, required him to remember what the LORD had already done for him and on that basis to place his trust in the LORD for this new challenge... his need of water.

Through these circumstances, which were extremely challenging, Isaac and Rebekah were learning to live by faith in the LORD.

And as they followed the LORD and walked away from conflict, look at how the LORD encouraged them – **read v.24.**

The LORD keeps his people from stumbling by speaking into their lives the truth of who he is; and by speaking his promises to them.

The LORD does so in order that our hope would be in him and in his provision for us... not just materially, but also spiritually.

Look at what is said to the people of God after Jesus returned to heaven...

2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has given us **everything we need for life and godliness** through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these he has given us **his very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

The promises of God are intended to encourage his people to live like Him – to be holy as he is holy; to walk as Jesus walked.

In response to God's encouragement, look at what Isaac did – **v.25a**.

Isaac worshipped the LORD.

He called upon the name of the LORD.

His call to God was a call of faith.

Such calls delight God, for the LORD says in Romans 10:13 that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.

There is one further way God blessed Isaac and Rebekah.

God kept Isaac from stumbling in his response to Abimelek.

Read v.26-31.

There was tension between the two men.

But God who is known as the God of peace... had been training Isaac to be a man of peace.

Isaac was being taught that a harsh word stirs up anger, but that a gentle answer turns away wrath.

Isaac's response to Abimelek was gracious.
He made a feast for Abimelek, Ahuzzath and Phicol.
He did so out of the abundance which God had provided him with.

And then he entered into a covenant with them, promising he would not harm them, but treat them well.

Read v.32-33.

It is incredible, that on that very day, not the following week or the following month, but that very day, having responded as God led him to respond, God further blessed Isaac and Rebekah with the discovery of a well at Beersheba that came to be known as "Shibah," which means the well of oath.

Genesis 26 is an interesting chapter.

It tells the story of a famine, a story of how Isaac and Rebekah were told by God where to live, a story of a lie told by Isaac about Rebekah, a story of a planted crop that became a bumper harvest, a story of digging wells and conflict with the Philistines over ownership of those wells, and a story of a negotiated peace.

In this chapter Isaac and Rebekah faced a number of trials where the potential for them to stumble and fall and fail was very real.

They were not unique.

All who follow the LORD will face trials.

There are many circumstances we face that have the potential to cause us to stumble and fall and fail.

The LORD uses such trials... to teach his own to live in dependence upon him and he uses such trials to discipline his own... training them to trust him in all things; and to live in dependence upon him.

To the descendants of Isaac and Rebekah the LORD said this...

Deuteronomy 8:3

“...man does not live on bread alone
but on every word that proceeds from the
mouth of the LORD.”

The LORD is faithful, and his Word is dependable.

He will guide his people.

He will use his Word to sustain their souls.

Deuteronomy 8:3

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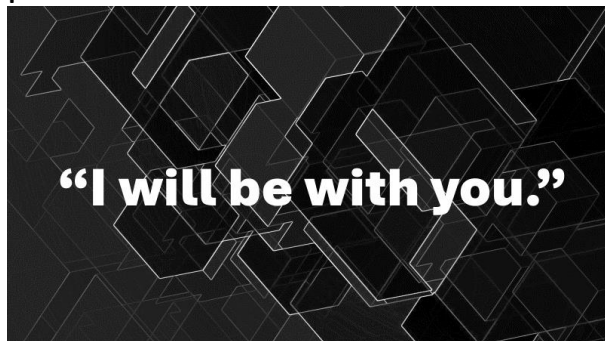
Deuteronomy 8:5

“...as a man disciplines his son, so the
LORD your God disciplines you.”

The LORD will also use his Word to train his own to lean not on their
own understanding.

His intent is always motivated by his love for his people.

The LORD is able to keep his own from stumbling because he has
promised...



There is nothing that God cannot do.

If the LORD has saved our soul, and he has, then he is more than able to keep us from stumbling; more than able to sustain us, more than able to make us in practice what he has declared us to be – righteous.

The Spirit of God in the book of Hebrews beautifully restated the promise... **“I will be with you.”**

He moved the human author of Hebrews to write: **“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”**

And then the Spirit had the human author of Hebrews connect this promise to a cry of the heart spoken in faith by God’s people through Psalm 118:6-7:



Isaac and Rebekah repeatedly experienced the LORD being their helper, the Strong One who kept them from stumbling.

The LORD has not changed.

He too is the helper of all who follow Him.

He too will provide us with his counsel of what to do.

He too will intervene when needed... to rescue us... if and when we foolishly depend upon lies to survive.

He will intervene in order to bring us into the light of his truth.

The LORD will keep us from stumbling in conflict and fighting fights that he would have us walk away from.

He will provide for us when our obedience of him proves costly.
He will never fail us.

The LORD will provide grace that will enable us to be peacemakers who cover with love the sins and bad behavior of others.

The One who keeps us from stumbling is at work in us ... for it is his intent to present us before his glorious presence... without fault... and with great joy.

The work of God is to remove from us all vestiges of sin.

Right now we are sinners saved by grace.
Right now we are redeemed and reconciled rebels.

But when our Savior returns, visibly and bodily to the earth, he will complete in us his salvation – he will make us to be righteous in our bodies, in our souls and in our spirits.

We belong to God, now and forever.
Now and forever – we are his people, who live for the praise of his glory, majesty, power and authority.