

The Lord Reigns in the Lives of His People

Genesis 24:10-26 ¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods *were in* his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*. ¹² Then he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ "Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ "Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'-- *let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." ¹⁵ And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. ¹⁶ Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. ¹⁷ And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." ¹⁸ So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." ²⁰ Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels. ²¹ And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not. ²² So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, ²³ and said, "Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father's house for us to lodge?" ²⁴ So she said to him, "I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor." ²⁵ Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge." ²⁶ Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD.

Because we fail to trust God's control, we spend many fruitless hours in worry, fear, anxiety, guilt and doubt. We wonder about our choices and think, "if only I had done this or that different . . ."
We agonize over decisions we must make, worrying what the result and consequences of those decisions will be.

The people in our text this morning show us a better way. We see Abraham, Abraham's servant, Isaac, Rebekah and even Laban and Bethuel all of them faced with life changing decisions simply trust that the Lord is in control.

It's too bad that the writer to the Hebrews leaves out mention of Rebekah in his list of heroes of faith in chapter 11.

By faith Rebekah choose to go with Abraham's servant, leaving behind all, to be the wife of man she had not met, in order that she might not only receive the promise but be a part of it and obtain a place in the story of God's salvation.

Truly Rebekah's faith is not any less than Abraham's. She too was called by God to leave her family and go to a unknown land, and she went.

But even more than the faith of Rebekah and these others what we see in our text is that the Lord is in control, guiding all things for his own purposes.

There is much more at stake here than just a wife for Isaac. Isaac was the promise bearer. Through him and his wife would come Jacob, the nation of Israel, and eventually the Savior himself.

The decisions of our lives are seldom so important to God's salvation. Nevertheless, we can still have the same confidence that God is in control and guiding our lives as well.

Yet through Jesus Christ we have the same promises, as the Lord reminded Zechariah.

Zechariah 4:10 who has despised the day of small things?

2Ch 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

Matthew 28:20 I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Since it is evident that the end of the world has not yet come, therefore it is evident that God's promise still stands. Rather than worry about past or present decisions. We know that we are sons of God through Jesus Christ. We know that by virtue of His blood we are confident that God is in control of our lives just as He was for Isaac and Rebekah.

We doubt God's control because of human actions

One of the reasons we often doubt God's control is because we see so clearly the human the earthly causes.

Those of you who have read the Hobbit, may remember the last little bit of dialogue between bilbo and Gandalf. They changed this part for the movie, and it doesn't have quite the same effect. But in the book right at the story reads:

*"Then the prophecies of the old songs have turned out to be true, after a fashion!" said Bilbo.
'Of course!' said Gandalf. 'And why should not they prove true? Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies, because you had a hand in bringing them about yourself? You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit?*

From <<https://tolkienillustrations.tumblr.com/post/649743060707770368/then-the-prophecies-of-the-old-songs-have-turned>>

Bilbo is looking back on his adventures and all that he sees is the decisions that he and others made, and the result of those decisions.

Bilbo thinks, "I gained the ring because I was smart enough or lucky enough to outwit Gollum."

But Gandalf implies that even though he can't see it there was a higher power at work to bring about the fulfillment of the old prophecies and song.

Now the Hobbit is pure fiction. However, our text and many other bible passages as well reveal to us a very similar truth to what Gandalf was telling Bilbo.

That is that God is in control, and that even events which seem to us to be merely the outcome of our own actions and decisions, the truth is that all things are really in His hands.

We have tendency to think like Bilbo. That is why we have a tendency to see the human and the earthly side of things and therefore to discredit God's providence, and God's control.

A good example of this is the call process. God's word is quite clear:

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

This passage promises that when the voters get together to call a pastor, a teacher, or even council men or school board, that God is working through them and the call is from God not just from men.

We tend to doubt the promise Jesus makes in Matthew 18:20 because we can see so much of the human side of things effecting the result. We vote for a councilman just because they are higher on the list. We vote for one pastor over another because we know them and like them better. We vote for this teacher over that one because we have reason to believe they are looking for a change.

We know that we didn't vote because we heard God's voice or because we felt the spirit move us. We see the effect of earthly human reasons. We see earthly causes and effect and it causes us to doubt God's promise, power, and providence.

In our text Abraham's servant asks for a sign. The sign is fulfilled because of something Rebekah chooses to do. She for her own reasons decides to offer water even to this man's camels. That is a decision that Rebekah makes, yet the servant doesn't doubt that it is God at work. Despite all the human choices it is still God who is in control.

We doubt because of human sin

We also tend to doubt God's promise because we see the sinful side of things. We call a pastor or a teacher and things go badly. Things don't work out because of their sin or because of ours. That too causes us to doubt did God really call this individual?

But man's sin does not reduce, diminish, or discredit God's promises and power.

We saw that two weeks ago regarding baptism. Man's sin with regard to turning away from the promises given in baptism does not disprove God's power in baptism.

God chose and called Saul to be king. The fact that Saul later proves to be a sinful and wicked king does not change the fact that God called him. It also does not prove that God made a mistake. Jesus called Judas as one of his disciples. He did not call him to betray Jesus. Judas's later sin does not change God's calling.

Even Joseph does not doubt that God is the one in control even though he knows firsthand that it was his brother's sins which put him as a slave in Egypt.

Gen 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

The fact that we can clearly see the effect of human, earthly, or even sinful decisions does not negate the promises God gives to us, especially that He is in control.

Jesus reassures us:

Joh 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

We doubt because of human thinking

One of the reasons we have trouble accepting, believing, and trusting this is because we tend to think one way or the other. Either a form of fatalism, God is in control and everything that happens is His will Or absolute free will, man makes his own choices and everything that happens is the result of our choices.

The truth is subtler than either of those two. The truth is that man makes his own choices, but God is still in control and is working all things to "**the good of those who love him.**"

My grandpa loved to tell the story of the native American in the canoe. My understanding is that ancient canoes were not as stable as their modern counterparts. One had to be skilled in balancing carefully in order not to tip over. My grandpa would tell of the time he was out in a canoe with a skilled native American. Every movement which any of the passengers made that man would perfectly balance it with a move of his own.

This is a much more accurate picture of the truth of God. God does not force us to choose according to His will. He gives man free will, but he still maintains control.

Matthew 23:37 - "you were not willing"

Romans 8:28 - "he works all things for the good of those who love him."

This is our confidence through our savior Jesus Christ. It is a confidence that we have through our baptism and because we have been adopted as sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. God's power is with us in our lives just as it was in the lives of Isaac and Rebekah.

Isa 46:4 Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you.