

# Everlasting God

Grace Fellowship | Jim Jones | Genesis 21:22-34

Well, good morning, Grace Fellowship. Some of you may be thinking right about now that you—you don't see me often in a coat and tie. I just made a warning to Acree this morning: I'm coming for you. So, I'd also say just this very quickly: we're going to have to buckle up. We've got a—we've got a long way to go in a short time to get there. And so, let's pray together, shall we?

Father, this morning I would ask You, in Your infinite grace and mercy and wisdom, that You would use the weakness of Your servant, the power of Your Spirit and Your word, as Corey has already prayed, to transform lives. Father, would You convict where conviction is needed? Would You encourage and give hope where that is needed? But most of all, God, we pray that You would be glorified through the preaching of Your holy word. And we all said...

All right, gotta pull—pull my glasses out. Very grateful to be here again this morning and to be able to preach the word of God. This past Friday, I had the opportunity to sit in our chapel service, and Jason Hammond preached a message from this text. And I was greatly encouraged by that text, but I was also greatly encouraged by the comments and the—the response that was given from those who were in chapel that day. And I—I just want to say that as a pastor, I find it very encouraging because what I heard from that is there were several within that congregation on Friday that had already read ahead in the text and had studied the text and thought about the text and meditated on the text.

And I—I can just tell you, as a pastor, that's one of the greatest joys for me is to see when God's people are taking it upon themselves to study the word of God and they're not just letting somebody else preach it to them. And so, I just want to commend you that do that and encourage others to do that. And I would also just want to thank the Lord how He moves in His people.

Looking at this today, and all of that said, when we approach the study of God's word, we should always start with this: What? The question is, what is being written and who is it being written to, and to what purpose is it writing? And I tell you that really hit me this week because I was kind of thinking of—I'm looking ahead to Genesis 22 when we started planning out the—the preaching calendar and looking ahead. And I thought Genesis 22—in fact, I think I said when we were doing that—I want Genesis 22. Well, I didn't get Genesis 22; I got Genesis 21 at the end. And as we—we kind of look at that and as I started sitting down to read that and meditate on that and think about it...

One of the things that I did is I just went all the way back to the first chapter of Genesis and I read the entirety of Genesis. And what I found as I—as I walked through the scriptures, it

was almost like going back and just sitting down with some old friends and just recounting the glory of God throughout this study of Genesis that we've been in for over a year now and will probably be in for the next year. I found that greatly encouraged me in that. But the question that we have to ask again this morning is, why was Moses writing this particular text to the recipients? What is his purpose in that?

And then I have to ask the question as a pastor, saying, what was the intent that he had for the people that are hearing it at the time? And then I have to be able to bridge that and— and bring that connection to what does that say to us as a people? How do we receive that word and—and what application does that have for us? Well, if you're like me, I love to read and hear about those moments of the spectacular. I mean, I—I love to read the stories where the miracles happened. So what do we do with a message like this that, on the surface, it seems to be ordinary?

Ordinary. I believe Rob—I think I saw him in here earlier—that Rob had said that on—on Friday, he says when he read it, it just—it just seemed ordinary. Just kind of plain. What do we do with that? How do we—how do we handle that? Well, first is to recognize that the same God that moves in the spectacular is the same God who moves in the ordinary. You see, most of us just live ordinary lives. Not a lot spectacular going on in our life, just the day-to-day grind.

And I believe that that is the reason that Moses is writing to the people, letting them know that—well, there may be spectacular moments, but here is what I think he wants us to get mostly from this message. And if you would just look at your Bible in chapter 21 of Genesis, and I want to just read chapter—or verse 33—and then we'll go back and read the entirety of the scripture. Here's where I believe that Moses is trying to get across: "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God."

I want you to just marinate on that for a moment. The Everlasting God. Calling on this God. The God whom we have sung praises to this morning, the God whom we have—said prayers to this morning, the God who we are listening to this morning through His word is the Everlasting God. Do—do you grasp the—the weight and the depth of that? Do—do we see that this God whom we come in and sometimes that because we've lived this ordinary life all week long and—and we fail to realize that there is this God who is sovereign over all of creation? And He is in charge of the ordinary as much as He is the spectacular.

I don't know about you, but I find that extremely comforting because I live really a very ordinary life and I love the fact that this God who is everlasting, that is not constrained by time or space... He is—He is all-knowing, He is all-powerful, He is all-seeing, and that very God is interested in our life. That's overwhelming. It should be. That this God that is beyond even our comprehension, that He looks down and He says, "I am planning your life." The scripture says that a man makes his plans, but God determines his footsteps.

Isn't it— isn't it reassuring, Saint, this morning that—that when you leave and when you rise that—that this very God has your life in mind? Oh, what a loving God. What a merciful God. Well, we just take a minute to think on that. And if we do, listen: the things that we have sung this morning, the confessions that we have said... we can trust Him. We can trust Him for protection and provision. JM, that song that we sang, it said the very—it's the point, one of the points: protection and provision.

We can trust this eternal and everlasting God for confidence or faith, and that it will continue to grow. And we can trust this everlasting God, and when we do, we will be provoked to an unashamed worship. What a blessing it was this morning just to hear the saints singing. Corey, like you, I pray: even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly, because listen—this world is in chaos, but the Everlasting God says, "I have a plan, it is going just according to My purpose." And there will be a day that all of us will be in front of Him, and we will all be singing His praises in unison together from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation, and His glory will be amplified like we've never experienced.

Let me read the text this morning and dive into the word. Beginning in verse 22 of Genesis chapter 21: "At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, 'God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.' And Abraham said, 'I swear it.'

When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water and Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech said, 'I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me and I have not heard of it until today.' So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart, and Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?' He said, 'These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that it may be a witness for me that I dug this well.' Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath.

So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines."

The first thing I think that we can see this morning from our text is found in verses 22 through 24, and that is this: trust in the Everlasting God because He provides and protects. Trust in the Everlasting God because He provides and protects and—and we can see that in just the first statement that comes to us, says, "At that time," right? And I—I remember just kind of pondering on this: "Lord, what does this mean, 'At that time'?"

Well, it really is covering chapter 20 to the end of chapter 21. And I don't know about you, but if you just went back over the series that we have been preaching—and I'm not sure I should have checked it out—how many sermons have been preached from chapter 20 to chapter 21? And I guarantee that there are lots of sermons that were preached just on those two chapters. And "at that time," what is going on? We're going back to the time that Sarah was given or taken by Abimelech. We see that God provides the promised son, Isaac.

We're able to see from that time that the—the... He protects Isaac from the threat of Ishmael. The Lord provides and protects for Hagar and Ishmael. The Lord even provides and protects Abimelech. Now that—that—if we just think about that for a moment, think of what all God is in the process of doing. We can trust in this Everlasting God that sets outside of time because He takes care of the small details of life.

You know, we live in a society today that is plagued with this thing called anxiety. Do you know what anxiety is? Anxiety is meditating on fear. Thinking of the worst that can happen. And rather than do that, we should think on what God's word says: "At that time." Just think about that and try to personalize that for your life this morning. Can you sit back and think and just say, "At that time, even though I did not know what God was in the process of protecting and providing for me..."

He protected me, He provided for me, He watched over for me, He gave, He provided all along in my life. God is a God that provides and protects His people. It's interesting here that Abimelech is the one who comes and seeks out a covenant with Abraham. Again, in verse 22 it says, "At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, 'God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity.'"

Abimelech seeks out a covenant with Abraham. Gotta ask the question, why? I mean, he's the king, right? He's the guy that's in charge. Abraham's not called a king here. We know that Abraham was powerful because we know earlier from reading and studying that he took 318 men trained for war, went and got Lot, brought them back. Some have estimated that his camp might have been upwards of 1,000 in his camp, so not just some small little group. But now you have this king who's coming to Abraham and he says, "Listen... I want you to swear an oath that you're going to deal with me and that you're not going to deal falsely with me, but that you're going to show kindness (hesed)."

That you're going to demonstrate that kindness to me. And—and again, we—we ask ourselves why? What is it that would move this king who owns and rules the land to come to Abraham and ask this? Well, the first thing that I thought and is this: he had an observation of Abraham and his life. He comes to him, he says, "God is with you in all that you do." Now, we can just read over that, right?

But my question is, as I study this, as I pray about this, is it comes to me and I ask the question, "Does anybody see God in me? Does anybody see that God is with me?" You know, sometimes we struggle over this concept of being a witness in the world and really what it—it comes down to, and I encourage people, "Don't worry about a four-point gospel plan, but live your life in such a way that when somebody comes and says, 'What is different about you?' that you're able to give an answer for the hope that dwells in you."

Now, I know it's a different guy up here but feel free to say "Amen" a little louder, that's okay, it means that you're just in agreement. Observation. Abimelech looked at Abraham and he could see that God was with him. It's a running theme through the Bible, a little bit further as we will go into—not for us now—but into Exodus, we look at Joseph and see the same thing: "See that God is with you in all that you do."

Don't we want, as a people, to live a life that folks would look and say, "Man, God must be with you. He—He must know you, He must—He must be doing something in your life. It seems to me that you are different from everybody else." That is why Corey, this morning when you prayed, I thought, "Thank you so much, brother," because we have a—we have a tendency to ignore things that are going on around in the world. And the world is in chaos, but isn't it wonderful to know that we have peace and God grants us peace because we have peace with God?

Well, Abimelech was able to observe the life of Abraham, seeing what he had with the Lord, but he also had a past experience, right? I mean, we know this, that he took Sarah and the Lord comes to Abimelech in the night in a dream and He says, "You're a dead man." Now, I don't know about you guys, but if the Lord comes to me in a dream at night and He says, "You're a dead man," I—I'm going to pay attention to what He is saying.

And He comes and he says, "You're a dead man because you have taken..." He's taken Sarah. What is really going on there? Though, God is protecting the promised seed. He can't let Abimelech get with Sarah because then the seed is compromised. He's protecting the seed and the promise that is to come through the son, Isaac.

So he has this past experience and he's seen it, not only that, but can you imagine how it must have been and the Lord tells Abimelech this? He says, "Listen... you go to Abraham and you have him pray for you," and then the Lord says He opened up the womb and those women began to have babies. That's pretty proof positive, isn't it? I remember saying some time ago that—quoting E.M. Bounds on his book of prayer—and he says that there is an ocean full of unanswered prayer because we never ask.

Wouldn't it be great to be known as a people that they see us and they see that God is with us in everything that we do? Wouldn't it be great to be known as a people that pray and as the Bible says, "the prayers of a righteous man availeth much"? That we anticipate God would answer prayer, that we would give Him glory when He does.

We see this recognition that not only is God with Abraham now but He's with his descendants. There's, again, not just a "I just want you to pray for me." I—I think Abimelech recognized that this promise that God had given Abraham, that "I'm going to bless you and all of your descendants, you're going to be like—your descendants will be like the sand, it'll be like the stars of the sky, they will not be able to be numbered."

And he says, "So I don't want just a treaty with me right now; I want this treaty to go to my descendants and to all of my posterity." You—you see, there's just a reminder here for those that Moses is writing and saying, "You are God's called people, and from generation to generation, God is going to continue to bless." And if we go back to Genesis 12 and 2 and 3, we find this: the Lord saying this: "I will bless them that bless you and I will curse them that curse you."

Abimelech had a good reason for wanting a treaty. Abimelech could see the hand of God working in the life of Abraham. He could feel the prayers of a righteous man and he knew that a treaty was necessary and needed. The response of Abraham is just pretty clear: "I swear it." What—many negotiation... he just answered, "I swear it." And in that, he is saying, "If I don't do this, may God do to me worse. I swear it."

Here's our second point: trust in the Everlasting God produces a confidence. Look at verse 25: "When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech said, 'I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me and I have not heard of it until today.' So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant."

Let me just stop right there for a moment. He sees this—there's somewhat of a play on words and I—I won't have the time to go into it—but you remember back when Abimelech had taken Sarah and he had no idea and he says, "You told me that she was your wife." Here he is saying, "Listen... I don't know anything about this. This is the first I've heard about it. Why didn't you tell me?" I believe Abimelech is keeping in mind everything that has happened to him in the past in reference to God, and he's wanting to make that right.

So when he approaches or comes back and responds to what Abraham says, he says, "I didn't know anything about it. Uh—just—I haven't heard about it until today." And then it says that the two men made a covenant. Look at verse 28: "And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart." I want you to think on that a minute, we're going to come back.

"And Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?'" He said, "These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that it may be a witness for me that I dug this well. Therefore that place was called Beersheba." Now, a couple of things from this point. Let me just say first of all that when we look at trusting in the Everlasting God, that it produces a confidence or it is faith-building.

And—and I will say that we believe—and this is... I'm just going to give you guys a heads-up, this is going to be a great place for an "Amen," okay? So I just want to let you know right now that when we say at Grace that it is by grace and it is by mercy that you are saved, we mean that there is nothing we can do to merit salvation. But did you know that God still calls us to be in a people of obedience?

You know why a lot of people struggle with confidence? Is failure to be obedient to His word. When we are obedient to what God calls us to do, there's a confidence that comes from it because we begin to see God working in our lives. I believe Abraham saw that and that's why when it comes that time that they've made this covenant, he says this: "That here is a problem about a well, Abimelech. I want to confront you about this well."

Why is this so important? Well, because Friday Seth made an observation that we see a pattern in the Bible about water: it provides life and it also deals with judgment. And I think that's important here because it's talking about providing life. Abraham knows the necessity of the water; it is essential. Now, most of us here in the United States of America, in most of the Western world, you can go over and turn your faucet on and water comes out. It's amazing.

I—I am still, you know, after serving a few tours in—in places where there was a lot of sand... uh—it was always amazed that when I came home, I could just turn a spicket on and have water. Because that wasn't the way it was over there. You just—you were drinking out of bottled water all the time. The—the idea of just a spicket coming up was unheard of.

That's the way it was in this place. Water was essential for the people and essential for life. They cut a covenant there. They swear an oath there and—and there's that swearing of the oath that deals with, "Hey, I am going to..." Abraham has already sworn to that, he says, "I am going to be faithful and I'm not going to deal falsely with you and I'm going to show kindness to you." And it's at that point that he brings up the fact about the well and how Abimelech's men had taken the well that Abraham had dug.

And I think the important one that we want to focus in on here is that gifts are given in the form of livestock, but then if we look, there's a second set of gifting and seven ewe lambs are set aside. If you're just reading through the Bible, you ought to be saying, "What is that about? What—what are those seven ewe lambs about?" Well, if we just do a little bit of study on numerology in the Bible, we know that the—the number seven is dealing with perfection.

And—and if you're students like we are here at Grace, we're always looking for where Christ is projected from the scriptures. And so we have these seven lambs. Who is Christ called? The Lamb of God. What's the perfection, the perfect lamb? Jesus Christ. So as we look here and we see that there are these seven lambs that are set aside and—and he says, "This is to guarantee that you acknowledge before me that this well is mine. I dug it."

And Abimelech accepts that. Accepting that secures the right of Abraham's claim. The well anticipates a greater source of life and when we were studying this morning, she's in Exodus right now and she said, "Isn't it amazing how the well always comes in in the scriptures and how important that is?" And she was just talking about even Moses met his wife at a well.

Uh—now this is completely ad-libbing here. Completely not in my notes. But young men and young women, if you want to find a spouse, go to the well of life. You find a place where God is present and you begin to look there. Free of charge. When you're 70, Aaron, you can do a lot more than you used to.

So here, I—I want you to... Corey had when we were Jason and Corey and I were meeting the other day, Corey brought this up and I thought it was so good. It's at this point that here is a bloodless oath that was sworn and peace was established and water, the source of life, was given. That was the first covenant that was made.

But I want you to listen to this covenant. I want you to grab the depth of what I believe we now connect to what Moses was writing at the time. Here's this bloodless covenant being made at this well for peace, security, and life. But at the cross, peace is secured through the blood of Christ, and Christ gives living water. You see, the water that we drink from is eternal. It's eternal life. It's forever.

Let me move quickly to the last point. Trust in the Everlasting God promotes worship. Abraham, according to the scriptures here, he plants a tree—some in the reading I did said it was more than a tree, that he actually planted a—a grove of trees—but what is—what is the importance that he is dealing with here? What—what is he trying to get across to us? Well, it's a demonstration that he trusts the Lord that He has given him peace and life in the land that he is sojourning in.

It—it is a place that he calls on the name of the Lord and you will remember back when early in our series on Genesis that we were called to do this is that when we heard that first time the public calling on the name of the Lord, it—it was an act of worship in a group of people. I just want you to think about that for a moment. Isn't it amazing for about 6,000 years that there have been a group of people gathering together for the proclamation of God's word?

To me, that just says something very special, that God is that everlasting God, He is an unchanging God, He does not change. And we have the privilege of joining with Abraham and those who have gone before us to do the very same thing: to call upon the name of the Lord, to—to publicly come and worship this everlasting God. It—it is to be a continued obedience of truth, and—and hopefully every Sunday that—that we get up, we're not coming in just to see each other, and that's a wonderful thing, but to come into the presence of the Lord and saying, "Almighty God, we are here, understanding that You are everlasting, and we're coming here to worship You."

And so it will be until the day comes for us. I, as—many of you said, I'm very proud of it... uh—70 years old. I'm grateful to be there, so grateful. Uh—had a little birthday party the other night with Claire and the rest of the family and she says, "What's your wish, Papa?" And I said, "More years to serve Christ." That's my wish. Because when you get here and you see this everlasting God, death is not fearful. It's getting closer when I get to see Him face-to-face without fettered by the weight of sin.

What a day that will be. Let's give you just a couple of minutes of application, okay? How does it apply? What can you do with this text? Let me ask this: does the world around us notice that we are blessed by God? Where you work, where you play, do they see that God is in you? Do they notice that? Do our prayers impact those around us?

Do we attempt to bless others and live a life of truth and not falsehood? Do we trust the everlasting God to provide and protect for us and our offspring? Do you have a confidence in Christ, and if not, why? Are we a people of unashamed worship? And finally this: do we see ourselves as pilgrims, aliens? We're just traveling through.

We're just waiting. Waiting for that blessed hope. We're not of this world. Our citizenship is somewhere else. Let's pray. Father, we thank You this morning for the glory of Your everlasting name. We thank You that we have the privilege of crying out to You and, Lord, knowing that You hear the prayers of Your people.

And we pray, Lord, as we finish this time together in worship today, Lord, that we would be reminded, Lord, as we take communion, that we're able to do this because You are the wellspring of life, You are the eternal water that we will never thirst if we drink from You. So as we remember Your sacrifice, may we remember that You are everlasting. Father, may we not trust in the covenants of the world, but may we trust in the cross of Christ this morning.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

As the worship team begins to play, I'm going to open the table. Just a couple of things to remind everyone: this is for God's people. This is the altar call for God's people. It's a time that we come forward as God's people, having confessed our sin, renewing this week that we are going to live for the everlasting God. And as we take the bread and the juice this morning, it's a reminder that this—this great God, who is portrayed coming in Christ, gives us life and life eternal.

So when you take the bread and when you drink the juice, thank Him for His great sacrifice. If you don't know Christ, we would ask you, please don't come. It's a dangerous thing to take the supper not knowing Christ. Find somebody after the service, find me, one of the other pastors, and we would love to share with you how you can come to know this everlasting God.

Just as we prepare for this, just take a—just a moment and think about this everlasting God. Oh, He loves us. The night that the Lord was betrayed, He took the bread and He broke it and He says, "This is My body that was broken for you." I don't ever want to get past being broken. Eat it.

In the same way, He took the cup. Said, "This is the blood that was shed for Me." Precious. I don't ever want to do this just out of rote. I want the blood to wash me clean daily. Drink it.