

MEDITATION ON THE THREE WELLS

My reading this morning takes me to the account of Isaac (Gen 26) as he journeys to Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, because of a famine in Canaan. The Lord Himself had appeared unto him (vs 2) telling him not to go to Egypt, and Isaac obeyed. But obedience to the Lord did not bring Isaac a life of prosperity and ease and comfort. While it is true that he accumulated many possessions, he also found himself responsible for not only his family with all their servants and families, but also a great company of herdsman to care for his many flocks and herds which had become very great (vs 14). Providing food in the plains of Gerar was not a concern, but the Bible devotes five verses in this account to the difficulty of providing clean, fresh, life-sustaining water.

The first recorded difficulty concerns the wells that Abraham, his father, had dug when he had also been a sojourner in the land. Isaac was probably shocked to learn that the Philistines had filled them with dirt, rendering them useless. Of necessity then, and most likely panic-stricken, Isaac was compelled to dig new wells, only to be confronted with Philistine herdsman ready to do battle, declaring the wells to be their possession (vs 20-21). Unwilling to dwell in this place of contention and strife, Isaac relocated once again to a spacious, peaceful place and was finally able to dig a well that furnished a plentiful supply of water.

On first glance, this seems to be an interesting historical account, but with little instruction for us. However, a period of meditation can reveal some relevant application. Taking Isaac to be a representative of God's chosen pastors, responsible for those under their care, we can see that the dirt-filled wells were useless. In the same way, pastors who are contaminated within by sin in their lives can only produce deficient, muddy water at best, which, in turn, eventually leads to disease and death of the flock.

Likewise, constant skirmishes and struggles, whether from without or from within, also destroy. It is interesting that one of the wells Isaac named "Sitnah" which means "contention or strife," but it comes from the same root word as "Satan." Satan enjoys seeing God's shepherds consumed with the battles rather than appropriating the victory. As Isaac wisely removed his people from the fray, we too must "leave off contention" (Pr 17:14).

Finally, as we refuse the contamination of sin and the destruction of endless controversy, God will restore us with an endless supply of life-giving water.

This lesson is especially applicable for me right now because we are presently without a local church fellowship. Having left the first stopped up well, we are looking for another. Under the providence of God, He has revealed the next danger awaiting us; wells of contention and strife. We will do well to apply this lesson and search until we find a peaceful assembly of saints who know how to drink deeply from the pure well of living water.