

Russell Kelfer

**Dear Gabby,
Dear Isaac**

710-A

Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

Dear Gabby, Dear Isaac

It all began as a storybook marriage. God miraculously brought together the pride and joy of two families of spiritual giants in such a way that we all exclaimed, “Here’s a marriage made in heaven.” Two such perfect people, so seemingly suited for one another, and seemingly hand-picked by God for each other; this will be the *perfect marriage*. We found, however, that for them as for so many others, the sea of matrimonial bliss was paved with jagged stones and unexpected turns. Had there been a “Seminar on Basic Family Conflicts” in Isaac’s home town, he surely would have gone, for he certainly had the conflicts and they were basic enough.

We tune in today on Isaac’s life as the hourglass of his stay on earth contains seemingly but a few grains of sand. His life is slipping away. There have been moments of greatness, to be sure. In the business and political world he has made his mark. He has become a man of great means. But on the home front, his expected area of strength, Isaac can find precious little to rejoice about. So this lesson will use just enough of your imagination to view these last scenes of Isaac’s life through the make-believe backdrop of a letter he might have written and an answer he may have received as his life was slipping away.

The title of this lesson is: “Dear Gabby, Dear Isaac”. We will be covering a passage of Scripture beginning with Genesis 26:34 and ending at Genesis 27:40.

Imagine, if you will, sleepily wandering out in the brisk morning air to pick up your copy of the Gerar Gazette. You open a new can of coffee and mutter, “Mrs. Olsen would be proud of me this morning; this is mountain-grown,” and then plug in your coffee maker and flip open the paper.

No doubt your first stop is the front page where you read of the tense events of Abimelech and the neighboring kings. The banner headline says, “Mideast Crisis” and this causes you to wonder if this part of the world is destined for centuries of

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unrest. You are right. A glance of the comics just uses a bit of your time and the sports section is less interesting than usual. Tension is building in the world and the Olympics have just been canceled. So you happen to glance at the human interest section and there your eyes fall on a favorite of yours, "Dear Gabby". The headline, "Patriarch Presents Problem," catches your eye. It is a letter from Isaac. You remember Isaac. He was voted most likely to succeed by his graduating class at Abraham High. He was all-province quarterback and later married Rebekah, the girl who won the Miss Mesopotamia Pageant. They were the ones who caused such a stir when, after twenty years of being childless, they brought twins into the world. We thought the press would never stop running pictures of those two boys.

But there was something strange about their family. There seemed to be conflict from the beginning. It seems that the oldest son sold his birthright to the younger one for a bowl of soup. They hated each other more and more as they grew older. But why would Isaac be writing Dear Gabby so late in life? "This I've got to read," you say to yourself. Read you do. It begins like this:

Dear Gabby,

My name is Isaac. I'm no ordinary man as you may know. I am the promised seed of my father, Abraham. Through my family, God will one day deliver the world. Riches have not escaped me. I can buy anything I want. I have never really wanted for anything. Now my life is ebbing away. Gabby, I have five major problems that have surfaced in these last days to bring me grief. I'd like to present them one at a time.

Problem number one is discouragement. I guess everyone gets discouraged, Gabby. Yet some things bring greater heartache than others. My first and greatest source is my son, Esau. Here is the problem Gabby. Incidentally, you and I can read the problem in Genesis 26 where it says this:

And when Esau was forty years old, he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

(Genesis 26:34,35 NAS)

Isaac continues:

All of our lives, Gabby, we have told our boys that they must marry a believer. We enrolled them in the Genesis Christian Academy so that they would meet the right kind of girls.

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Rebekah sponsored the Pioneer Girls in our church, Beersheba Bible Church, and we had all the socials at our house so that the boys would meet these girls. But, no, Gabby, this boy who was the apple of my eye, had to go and marry not one, but two Hittite girls. I know it broke God's heart and Gabby, it broke mine. I am discouraged. Can God still use Esau?

Gabby simply answers, *"To be continued tomorrow."*

The next day you brave the early morning mist to grab your Gazette, but this time you go straight for "Gabby" and you see it unfold again. This is better than "Search for Tomorrow," you think to yourself. Isaac continues,

Dear Gabby,

My second problem can be readily summed up by this passage:

Now it came about, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said, to him, "Here I am."

And Isaac said, "Behold now I am old and I do not know the day of my death."
(Genesis 27:1,2 NAS)

It was easy to see that Isaac was not only discouraged because his favorite son had dated and married two unbelievers. He was also discouraged because as life was slipping away, he had become disabled. He was on his deathbed. Though he could not know how long he has to live, his life is compounded greatly by near-blindness. This big hulk of a man is helpless. He has to be waited on hand and foot by Rebekah, a fact that she at times seems to resent. Something has come between these two as the years have gone by. I think maybe it was those boys of theirs. Isaac thinks of nothing but Esau. All Rebekah talks about is Jacob. Something has gone wrong between them. Their pastor told them to go the Messianic Marriage Encounter, but they never stopped arguing long enough to talk about it. Isaac asks:

Dear Gabby,

Have you ever known the humiliation of blindness and dependence after a life of activity and leadership? Gabby, why would God let this happen to me? I'm not only discouraged, I am disabled as well. What a way to end my life.

Gabby just adds again, *"To be continued."*

Now you and I don't really need to read Gabby to know the

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rest of Isaac's complaints. Better that we read them directly from the Word of God. Not only was this poor old man *discouraged* with his son's bad marriages, not only was he *disabled* and nearly blind, but the household was full of *division* as well, and it looked as though his helpmate was no help at all. We read about it in Genesis 27 as it goes on:

Now then [Esau], please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

And Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home,

Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying,

'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you.

Go now to the flock and bring me two choice kids from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves.

Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

And Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man.

Perhaps my father will feel me, then I shall be as a deceiver in his sight; and I shall bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."

But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me."

So he went and got the them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved.

(Genesis 27:3-14 NAS)

Division. Here was blind old Isaac, seemingly on his deathbed, offering to give Esau the blessing that God had intended for Jacob. Even though Jacob was God's choice, Esau was still his. Even then, he ties the blessing with a savory dish of game. One last evidence that the mighty sportsman had a chip off the old

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block in his husky hunter he called “Big Red”. So Esau, who would do anything for a good meal, knew old Dad would do the same. He packed up his trusty bow and arrow, hopped in his new Jeep, and drove up the mountainside.

Here we get a sad picture of what it is like to live in a divided home. We see Rebekah, Isaac’s not so helpful helpmate, hiding behind the door, eavesdropping on hubby’s last great plan in life. She doesn’t approve. As soon as Big Red is a block away, jealous Mom grabs her favorite son, Jake, and says, “You’ll never believe what Daddy’s going to do.” Did you catch that phrase in verse 6, “*I heard your father speak*”? Have you ever played that game, Mothers, with your children? “Just wait until your father gets home.” “Your father won’t understand.” “You’d better put that away before your father sees you.” “You know how your father is.” Little grains of sand that harden into concrete that say, “Your father,” meaning that Daddy doesn’t understand them like Mommy does. This can also mean slyly that you wouldn’t do that, of course, if it were up to you, but “You know how your father is.” Division is a crack in the foundation of authority that lets the termites of bitterness gnaw away at the structure of the home. Ladies, it isn’t *their father*, it is *our daddy*. It isn’t *his idea*, *the meanie*, it is *our idea*. You are a part of him in Christ. Rebekah had never really come to see submission as more than the obeying of certain commands. Submission is an attitude that gladly accepts his frame of reference as hers and sets out to make him successful. Submission is the expression on her face, the tone in her voice.

So Rebekah decides to deepen the rift and do that which she apparently didn’t believe God was capable of doing. When you are out from under the authority that God places over you, you tend to lose sight of His sovereignty. She tells Jacob to go out to the pen where the best livestock was kept and bring her two of the kids marked, “Prime”. She would cook them for Jacob, using her favorite recipe that Isaac loved. She thought, “He will never know what hit him and he will bless Jacob and that will be that”. “But Mom,” Jacob argues, “Red is hairy and I am not. We might get caught and I will get a curse.” He had a healthy kind of conviction, didn’t he? He said, “What if I get caught?” But Rebekah says, “I will take the curse. The risk is mine. You do what Momma says.”

Jacob is no saint, but his conniving mother basically was

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saying, “You choose again between your Dad and me. Lie to him and honor me, or honor him and disobey me.” So Jacob, this man of great conviction, goes the route that offers him the greatest gain. What a mess. A house divided against itself. God says that such a house cannot stand. Some wives have husbands who are spiritually blind and they use that as a weapon to pit their children as wedges between them to gain a greater share of their children’s affections. Dear Gabby, indeed. Discouragement, disability, and division. What a way to go.

Isaac’s fourth problem was the greatest of all, but a natural outgrowth of the third. The story goes on:

Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house and put them on Jacob her younger son.

And she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

Then he came to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?”

And Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me. “

And Isaac said to his son, “How it is that you have it so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me.”

Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son or not.”

So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”

And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him.

And he said, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he said, “I am.”

So he said, “Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son’s game, that I may bless you.” And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank.

Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come close and kiss me, my son.”

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So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said,

“See the smell of my son

Is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed;

Now may God give you the dew of heaven,

And of the fatness of the earth,

And an abundance of grain and new wine;

May peoples serve you,

And nations bow down to you;

Be master of your brothers,

And may your mother’s sons bow down to you.

Cursed be those who curse you,

And blessed be those who bless you.”

(Genesis 27:15-29 NAS)

Now the *division* leads to *deception* and Jacob carries out his mother’s hairy plan. Had Jacob been God’s kind of man he would have had no part of this plan. But he, you remember, was by nature a deceiver and a supplanter. So in essence he was just doing what came naturally. I think two or three things gall me more than the charade itself. The first is that Rebekah stole Esau’s clothes and put them on Jacob so that he smelled like the stockyards. I don’t know why that bothers me, but it just does. Secondly, the hairy skins on Jacob’s hands and neck were another real touch of class to this game. It seemed like a gross insult to a helpless blind man who had supported the family for forty years. But I guess the Snake of the Year Award goes to Jacob himself for his classic answer in verse 20. The question Isaac posed to him was, “How did you do this so quickly?” Jacob puts on his spiritual voice and says, “Because the Lord your God caused it to happen to me.” Oh, the things God gets the credit for when a deceiver is at work.

Now blind old Isaac suspects something but he can’t quite unwrap the package of lies. Rebekah had the bow too tight. So Isaac blesses Jacob. God would have seen to it that he had anyway, but this way Satan made a lot of points. As we shall see, the disease of bitterness was accelerated through the body of the family until murder became a reasonable alternative. So Isaac, discouraged at his son’s marriage, disabled and blind as he faces death and a divided family crumbling at his feet, deceived by those whose calling it was to be loyal to him, now receives the ultimate in disappointment. In walks Esau and the shock of it all comes out in the open. Better, you say, had he died in ignorance.

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Esau comes in with a dish that would have made Steak and Ale jealous. He was primed to receive his father's blessing. In verse 33 we read that Isaac trembled violently. He shares with Esau that an impersonator had stolen the blessing that was his. In verse 35 Isaac didn't need a detective to find the culprit. He says:

And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and has taken away your blessing."

In verses 37 and 38 Esau begins to cry so Daddy gives him a sort of left-handed blessing that had to include serving his brother at least for a time. Then we read:

So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." (Genesis 27:41 NAS)

In verse 42 Rebekah's secret service men report this plan to her and she grabs Jacob and tells him to run to Haran to hide out with her brother Laban. She tells Jacob in verses 44 and 45 to stay with Laban a few days so that Esau's anger may subside; then he'll forget all about it. "Then I will send you a message and you can come home," says Mom. So this conniving woman goes back to Isaac in verse 46 and says,

And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" (Genesis 27:42 NAS)

So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.

May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

(Genesis 28:1-4 NAS)

We read then that Isaac sent Jacob away. Esau saw that Jacob was gone and that he had gone to take a wife because their

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parents didn't like the daughters of Canaan. So we read in verse 8 that Esau saw the daughters of Canaan displeased his father, so he went to Ishmael and married, besides the wives he had, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son. Good Rebekah lies to Isaac again and pretends that she is uptight about Esau's Hittite wives and says that the only solution is for Jacob to go visit his uncle. She wants him out of town, out of his brother's reach. Kindly Isaac, mindful of God's promises, renews the blessing and sends him on his way. Meanwhile, wild-eyed Esau, jealous but still confused, goes out and adds one of Ishmael's daughters to his harem. That was as close as he could come to Abraham's seed.

What a sad ending. No wonder Isaac was a broken-hearted man. No one will dispute circumstantially that this child of the promise had no reason to live. The wife that he had given his life to had turned on him. His favorite son had broken his heart through disobedience. The other son had broken his heart through *deceit*. He couldn't see, but what his heart could see drove him to *despair*.

I wonder how Dear Gabby would answer this one, assuming of course she was a believer. I think her column in the Gerar Gazette the next day would have read something like this:

Dear Isaac,

Yours is a seemingly hopeless case. Just reading your story made me ponder on the emptiness of life until I thought on the deeper perspective. I suddenly realized that you, Isaac, are a fortunate man, fortunate in spite of how things look for three reasons. Let me remind you, Isaac, of those three reasons.

The first is that these things that have happened to you have not changed either the plan of God or the method of God. So you are about to die and thus far you see no evidence that your family has within it the quality to carry on the banner of faith. I've got news for you, Isaac. God uses whatever he has. He may need to melt it down and rid it of some impurities, Isaac, but He can do that. He used you, didn't he? He can use a lying, deceiving, conniving son as well. Not because he is worthy, Isaac, but because he is God's. God will do what it takes, Isaac. God will wrestle with him if necessary. But he will come around. You may not live to see it, Isaac; you just have to take it by faith. Remember why He used you? Remember when you were quarreling with the herdsmen of

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Gerar and God appeared to you and said, "I will bless you for the sake of Abraham?" Don't forget that, Isaac. That is the key. It is because of Him that you were blessed. It is because of Him.

There is a second reason for rejoicing, Isaac. That is because these things have not changed the Word of God. God made your father a promise. It was not predicated on your worthiness, but on God's Word. Isaac, that Word will never change. There is a third reason, Isaac, to have hope. It is because these things have not changed the love of God. Nothing changes the love of God, Isaac. It was not affected when you tried to pass Rebekah off as your sister like your Dad did. God was disappointed. But He didn't love you any less. He can't love you any less and still be God. He was there when Esau chose those unbelieving wives, and it broke His heart; but He doesn't love Esau any less. He witnessed the sham that Rebekah and Jacob played on you and it broke His heart, but He doesn't love them any less. He can't; so why should you?

So there you have it, Isaac. You've had a rough life, I agree to that. God never promised you otherwise. But Isaac, though you may not live to see it, you can die a happy man, because the plan and the purposes of God have not changed. The Word of God has not changed. The love of God has not changed. Congratulations, Isaac. You are a fortunate man.

Gabby

Now please forgive me if taking the license of "Dear Gabby" offended you. I only wanted to bring this man's problems into the perspective of our daily lives. The truth is this: as you grow older and as you spend time with others who have walked this earth, several things continue to surface as truth.

God never promised us an easy life. If Christians were promised physical ease, financial prosperity and the absence of circumstantial and emotional pressures, you would have to assume that God did not give His own Son the best He could. That is blasphemy. That kind of gospel may bring what looks like converts, but Jesus says that when the heat of persecution begins to shine, they wither and die for they have no roots.

God's own Son had no place to lay his head. He never had the acceptance of His own people. He was despised and rejected of men. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

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Cause for *discouragement*? He came unto his own and His own received Him not. That is cause for discouragement. *Disabled*? At the prime of his life he was captured by a gang led by one of His trusted followers and hung on a cross before thousands and left to die. *Division*? His key lieutenants were arguing over who would be the greatest in the kingdom. When the heat was on, they all forsook Him and fled. *Deception*? His treasurer sold Him out for a few pieces of silver. His enemy met Him in the wilderness fasting and offered Him a counterfeit kingdom for a simple compromise. *Disappointment*? Three years He walked this earth and at His death had no visible, physical sign that any one of those that He had poured His life into was so much as ready to live for Him, let alone die for Him.

You say, then how could He, like Isaac, die confident that the future would be bright? I'll tell you how. It was because the plan and the purposes of His Father had not changed. He chose out plain, ordinary men, fishermen, tax collectors and the like, men who in the thick of the conflict didn't have the natural courage to stand alone. Weak men they were by the world's perspective. Like Isaac, when physical death came to Him, there wasn't much evidence that the straggly band of followers would ever fulfill the plan of God.

But you remember what God told Isaac. "I'll do it for Abraham, for his sake, because of him." Abraham is a type of Christ and is once again our example. God was going to do it again for Jesus' sake. Because of Him, the weak, the faithless, the uneducated would come to life and bring life to the world. Likewise, Jesus died with confidence because His Father's Word had not changed. His Word said that He would be rejected. His Word said He would appear to have failed, and He did appear that way. His Word said that He would be crucified, and crucified He was. His Word said He would rise again as victor over death, conqueror over sin, and He did. His Word said He would come again, and He will. His Word said that one day He would rule with a rod of iron. His Word said that He would take away our sin and set up a real kingdom to reign forever. So when His physical life ended, like Isaac, He had very little to show for it except for a book full of promises that would one day come true. Nothing that happened to Christ changed those promises. They only proved them to be true.

Lastly, Jesus, like Isaac, died in confidence because His

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Father's love had not changed. It was, in fact, that very love that made the cross a necessity. That love would never fail, never change. Because God's methods and promises and love never change, Jesus hung on that cross and cried, "It is finished!" It was not as a note of defeat, but a song of victory. It was not a cry of finality, but as a chorus of beginnings. Things had been rough on planet earth for Jesus. He never expected it to be otherwise. Life on this earth was not designed for our pleasure, but rather for our preparation. It is not the showroom for our accomplishments, but the workshop for our character to be perfected. Beloved, we will have eternity to enjoy the results of it.

How does life look to you? Is your highway full of detours marked Discouragement? Disability? Division? Deception? Disappointment? "The disciple is not above his Master", Jesus said, "or the servant above his Lord". Have you been struggling to imagine how God could possibly use you with all of your faults and weaknesses? Have you forgotten that "not many noble, not many strong, not many wise have been called? But rather, God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and the weak things of this world to confound the strong that no flesh should glory in His presence"? That is us. This is a list of qualifications for greatness in the kingdom and we qualify.

You ask why? Because of Him. All because of Him. His strength is made perfect in weakness. When we aren't, He is. So as He did to Isaac, God whispers, "I will bless you because of Him".

Perhaps this poem will help make the point:

WHY GOD CHOSE ME

My talents? Is that what He saw long ago?
My talents? I see that the answer is no.
My looks? just a mirror dispels that thought;
If that is why He called me, He called me for naught.

My wisdom? No, not even a trace do I see.
Then, why? Tell me why, did my Savior choose me?
Just like the wind as it glides through the sky,
A voice softy whispers, "I'll tell you why."

"Because when I looked, you were nothing to see
And when I shine through nothing, then men will see Me.
I called you in weakness so I could be strong;
I call even the downcast and give them a song.

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“I call out nothing so when something appears,
Men give Me the glory and down through the years
It has always been so, though the world is appalled,
Not many noble or wise have been called.

The poor man, the weak man, though often despised
Come alive at God’s touch and the world is surprised.
The fruitless, the failures, the scum of the earth
Become princes and kings when God’s Son gives them birth,

What a trophy we are; what a vict’ry indeed
Not for our value; but rather, our need.
So let’s yield all we are, all we have, all we own,
Relinquish our pride and come down from our throne,

And turn now to Jesus, and worship and praise
That He may be Lord all the rest of our days
My talents? My wisdom? No, dear God, now I see
It was grace, and grace only, that You should choose me!

So the plan hasn’t changed, and we’re in the plan. God’s Word hasn’t changed either. He promised never to leave us or forsake us. He won’t. He promised to give more grace when things get rough. He will. He promised that one golden daybreak in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of a trumpet and the shout of an archangel, He will catch us up in His arms and take us home. He will. The good part is yet to come. We are in training for the finale. The finale lasts forever.

Oh, the finality of the Word of God. Arthur Pink puts it this way:

“The Word is immutable because God is immutable. His very essence is immutable. There was never a time that He was not. There will never come a time when He shall cease to be. God has never evolved, grown, or improved. All that He is today, He has ever been and ever will be.”

Malachi 3:6 says: “I am the Lord, I change not.” There is not a wrinkle on the brow of eternity; therefore, His power could never diminish; His glory can never fade.

God is immutable in His attributes. So it stands to reason that if His essence can’t change and His attributes can’t change, then His Word can’t change.

The counsel of the Lord standeth forever
The thoughts of His heart to all generations. (Psalm 33:11 NAS)

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Isaiah 54 says it best,

For the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed

But My kindness shall not depart from Me

Neither shall My covenant of peace be removed saith the Lord that has mercy on them. (Isaiah 54:10 NAS)

His Word won't change. His love won't change.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

(Jeremiah 31:3 NAS)

Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1 NAS)

Oh, love that will not let us go. It is love that will reach to the depths of our disobedience and say, "I still care." It is love that washes disciples' feet and still cleanses disciples' hearts. Oh, God, how boundless is your love for us. How unconditional, how unchanging. That makes the difference.

So often, like Job, we find ourselves having a pity party because life has taken some rough turns, and we seem to surmise that we deserve better. Satan seems to send the "d's" in waves: Discouragement by the barrel. Disability and difficulty with this temporary temple. Division and disharmony to the point of despair. Deception from both friend and foe. Disappointment upon disappointment from a human perspective. I don't mean to imply those crushing, traumatic, catastrophe-type things that happen to some, but the daily grind of life's disappointments just get hard. How many of you know what I mean?

As I pondered these passages, I drew comfort from the fact that God can still use the world's rejects and make them into princes and kings. He reminded me that He knew what He was doing when He called me. He wanted something weak to show Himself strong. He did the same for you. He whispered to me, "Remember it is all because of Him." It was comforting to be reminded that His methods have not changed. I also drew comfort from the fact that His promises haven't changed. If I were to view circumstances alone, I might think He has forgotten those promises He made to me in the dark of the night in the midst of tears. But it was as if I could say, "Isaac, now I understand. You couldn't see it, but you could see Him, so you knew He would keep His Word."

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But the greatest source of strength comes when God reminds us how much He loves us. It is encouraging to know that His plan doesn't change. It is encouraging to know that His Word doesn't change. Maybe some of you can remember as a child coming in from school. You had been in a fight and your knees were all skinned up and your pride was gone. Maybe you had just been rejected by the "in" crowd and you just felt like there was no place in the world for the likes of you. Or maybe you tried out for the baseball team and were chosen last or not chosen at all. It seems as though life just wasn't worth living. Then you heard the door open and behind you quietly, Mom or Dad had slipped into the room and put their arms around you and simply said, "I love you". The hurt seemed to go away. The rejection faded into insignificance. The failures? Well, tomorrow was a new day, and it would be worth it, just because you knew somebody loved you no matter what. That must be what Paul meant when he prayed for us in Ephesians 3 that:

Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith being rooted and grounded in Him that we might come to comprehend the height, the depth, the breadth of God's love for us that we might be filled with the fullness of God.

What is God then really saying to us? He's saying, "Son, daughter, I understand. It isn't easy. It won't be. It never has been. But children, I love you. I always have and I always will. No matter what, I will always love you." It's as though a big burden is lifted and a light turns on again and God says, "I love you and I am in control, so everything will turn out okay." He may be saying that to you today. He may be saying, "I understand. It is not easy, I never said it would be. But I love you and it is going to be okay."

Isaac, did you hear that? You can go home now to your Father in heaven with confidence. You can't see what's coming, yet. But Isaac, He loves you and it is going to be okay.

Dear Gabby, Dear Isaac

DOES HE UNDERSTAND?

Oh, the pressures of life and the failures of men
How they cause my heart to despair
And amidst life's defeat and the heartaches they bring,
I question, "Is God really there?"

Does He understand the pain I'm in?
Does He really hurt when I do?
Does He understand the rejection I feel?
Does He understand and hurt too?

"I understand, My child," He replies,
"I understand your pain,
I understand your broken heart
And I plan to heal it again.

"My plan hasn't changed amidst your toil,
I still use those who are weak.
And through voices silenced by circumstance
Can the voice of the Comforter speak.

"And My Word hasn't changed amidst your tears,
I still plan to do what I said,
For plans, like men, are best to God
When they have been raised from the dead.

"And most of all, child, My love hasn't changed,
No matter what's happened or will,
The love that I have for you, My child
Will simply grow stronger still."

So God understands the pitfalls
And the boulders that block our way
And quietly whispers, "I love you,
And it will turn out okay."

Dear Gabby, Dear Isaac

Additional questions for focus and application

1- Isaac must have come to his sunset years filled with discouragement. He has succeeded everywhere but where it counted (in his own home). He has allowed jealousy and partiality and deception to literally wreck his family. Can you relate to what must have been his feelings of failure? Was God through with his children? Had the final pages been written? Why is it important for us not to measure our lives by *traceable evidences*?

2- Esau knew better than to marry these Hittite women. We know Isaac and Rebekah were against these marriages. How do we know? Why was this such a grievous thing to God? What parallel can you draw in today's world?

3- God had allowed Isaac to be disabled by this time in his life. How must it have affected such an active man to become blind? Can you imagine how his wife dealt with it, based on how she used it as a ploy to get her way in this passage?

4- Isaac felt his life slipping away in verse 2 of chapter 27. Why do we suddenly begin to think about things in a different light when we think eternity is near? Why don't we always realize that eternity is near? What can we do to remind ourselves?

5- What was the basis of Isaac's favoritism of Esau? How was he using that to get attention at the end of his life?

6- What character qualities seemed most lacking in Esau? In Rebekah? In Jacob? What was Rebekah saying about her concept of authority? What was she teaching her boys?

7- Measure the ease of your life against that of God's own Son as He walked this earth. Compare his housing with yours. His success on the job. His success with relationships. His acceptance in the fellowship. His ultimate humiliation. If you had been Mary, His mother, how would you be assessing His life at the end? Why could Jesus be so confident? What three things do we know never change?

8- Why do you think God chose so many who were not wise, noble, or mighty? How can we teach this principle to our children? How does it differ from what they are taught by the world?

9- Memorize Isaiah 54:10.

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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