

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church
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DHW
LESSON 20

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter ends with a sad note. Esau married two Hittite women to the sadness of his parents. In this chapter, there is even more sadness. Many years had passed, and with the passage of time men may change either for better or worse. Isaac's family had started well. He was a man chosen by God and his family now was neither harmonious nor happy. This teaches us an important lesson, that is, after we have taken the step of confessing our sins and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must continue to obediently walk in the will and ways of God. We must make the right choices in our daily life and do things in the right way. Isaac began well in his life but he ended poorly. Although he was physically weak, there was no reason why he could not be spiritually strong towards God. In that respect he failed.

We also learn that God's plan and purpose can never be thwarted by man. The overruling providence of God controlling the affairs of sinful men is clearly illustrated in this chapter. All the

four protagonists – Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob sinned and acted foolishly and selfishly jeopardizing God's plan and purpose. But despite that His plan will still be on course. And we must realize too that while God's plan and purpose are still on course, men must bear the consequences of their foolish and sinful ways. The ends do not justify the means. Living godly lives by obeying and trusting God rather than our senses is a valuable lesson which we can learn from this study.

Another valuable lesson concerns the building of a strong, happy and united family. Prayer plays an important part. Isaac's marriage to Rebekah was made with much care and prayer (Gen. 24). The birth of Esau and Jacob was in response to Isaac's prayer to the LORD (25:21) and Rebekah conceived. And when the twin babies were struggling in her womb threatening a miscarriage, Rebekah enquired from the LORD (25:22). There was much prayer on the part of the parents of the twins. However, with the passage of time, such a great spiritual beginning had gradually slipped into dismay by all concerned. Each party was bent on doing what it wanted to do even its actions might abuse others. The LORD'S guidance was not sought as before.

As Christians we are not absolved from the consequences of our foolish acts. As God's people we must not stoop to achieve our desires by deceit and manipulative schemes. We must always

strive to achieve God's will through proper and righteous ways.

The chapter can be divided into the following outline:

- 1) Isaac intended to bless Esau contrary to the will of God (27:1-5);
- 2) Rebekah schemed to rob Esau of the blessing for Jacob by deceiving Isaac. (27:6-17);
- 3) Isaac was tricked to bless Jacob instead of Esau (27:18-29);
- 4) Esau vehemently pleaded with Isaac to bless him also (27:30-40);
- 5) Esau intended to kill Jacob whom Rebekah quickly sent away to Laban (27:41-46).

STUDY THE WORD

Isaac Intends to Bless Esau

Isaac felt that his time to die might be soon. His eyes were so dim that he could hardly see. He decided to give the blessing of the firstborn to Esau. The blessing of the firstborn was a special blessing. God laid a claim on the first born. He belonged to Him. The firstborn assumed the leadership of the family after the death of his father. In addition he was given a double portion of the father's estate and inheritance. He was also responsible to look after all his unmarried siblings. In natural circumstances, it was right and proper to

bestow the firstborn-blessing upon Esau, because he was Isaac's firstborn. But in this case, it was wrong for Isaac to give the firstborn-blessing to Esau. God had chosen Jacob, his younger son, to receive the blessing of the firstborn (25:23)

Apparently, Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob. He loved Esau's wild game hunting, and the venison he would prepare and cook for him. Thinking that he might soon die, he told Esau to hunt for wild game and cook a savoury meal for him so that he could enjoy eating it. And Isaac added *that my soul may bless thee before I die* (v.4). The import of this expression is repeated four times (verses 4, 19, 25, & 31). The repetition of the word *soul* gives emphasis to the use of the word. It indicates that Isaac wanted to bless Esau with all his heart and with all his resources and possessions. In short, Isaac wanted to give Esau the birthright of a firstborn. Esau knew what the blessing was. The prospect of it must have elated him. It is observed that Isaac told this only to Esau. He did this privately and secretly. For such an occasion, normally the father would inform and gather the whole family to witness the bestowment of the blessing and then to be followed with a feast. It would be a time of rejoicing. But he did not even consult Rebekah and neither did he inform Jacob. The fact that Isaac intended to do this secretly strongly suggests that he was aware of the word of God that the elder will serve

the younger (25:23). Isaac could not plead ignorance. He knew about it, even if he were not there when the oracle was given to Rebekah, His wife would have told him. His action therefore was in wilful disobedience to the will of God. There is a couple of plausible reasons. He loved Esau more than Jacob, and he loved to eat. He loved Esau for his manliness, his hunting skill and he enjoyed the venison, which he prepared after each hunting trip. Moreover Esau was the firstborn.

Therefore, doing this important thing in secret also indicates that there was something amiss in the family. It looks like there was a lack of communication. It seems that there was no harmony and unity in the family. Rebekah knew about the whole affair by overhearing the conversation between Isaac and Esau. Isaac definitely went against the will of God. He did not seem to care. His spiritual sensitivity was marred by his love for Esau and his gastronomic appetite. But God would not allow His plan and purpose to be thwarted by the foolish and sinful act of a man. It was providential that Rebekah overheard Isaac's conversation. Rebekah should have confronted Isaac directly and reminded him of the oracle of God. But she did not. Apparently, Isaac and Rebekah had lost their first love for each other. Though they remained husband and wife, they went their separate ways.

Rebekah Schemes to Get the Blessing for Jacob

So instead of talking with Isaac, Rebekah called her favourite son, Jacob. She told Jacob that his father intended to bless Esau. He had asked Esau to hunt for game and prepare venison for his father so that he could bless him in the presence of the LORD before his death. Rebekah then revealed her deceptive scheme to Jacob. She told him to obey her by bringing her *two good kids of the goats*, and she would make the kind of savoury meat which his father liked to eat (v. 9). Then he could take it to his father that he might eat and that he might bless him instead before his death. Jacob too was quick-minded by pointing out that Esau was a hairy man whereas he was smooth-skinned. His father might feel him and his deception discovered, and his father would curse him instead of blessing him. The mother encouraged the son by saying that let the curse be upon her, and told him to carry out her orders. Jacob obediently carried out her mother's orders. Then she chose Esau's best clothes for Jacob to wear and she attached the skins of the goats onto Jacob on the hands and the neck. She knew where Isaac would touch on the parts of Esau's body. Having prepared the savoury meat and the bread, she handed them to Jacob to bring them to Isaac, his father.

Rebekah knew that Jacob was the one whom the LORD had chosen to be the successor of Isaac. As already

mentioned she could have warned Isaac, but she did not. She thought of this wicked scheme to trick Isaac into blessing Jacob. While she was right in trying to get Jacob blessed, which was in accordance with the divine will, her means of achieving the end was definitely wrong. God would not condone their joint action. At the same time, we see that Jacob was morally weak as he obeyed his mother unquestionably even though her scheme was dangerous and deceptive. He obeyed blindly. It was possible that Jacob could have reasoned in his heart that Esau had sold his birthright to him. But this was not the way to go about it. They needed to trust God to bring about what He had declared in His time and way.

Isaac Is Tricked to Bless Jacob

Jacob presented himself to Isaac. Isaac was surprised that Esau was able to return so soon. Jacob lied, his first lie here – *I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me* (verse 19). He was not Esau. When Isaac asked him why he was able to return in quick time, Jacob lied the second time – *Because the LORD thy God brought it to me* (v.20). He blatantly told a two-fold lie. He attributed his ability to return so soon because God had helped him to get the animal. Firstly, he blasphemed the name of God making God an accomplice of his deception. God did not help him to get the goats for it was taken from

Isaac's own domestic livestock. He did not hunt for the goats. Isaac then called Jacob to come nearer to him so that he could feel his body. Jacob obeyed. Isaac then said that his voice was Jacob's but when he felt the hairy hands he concluded it was Esau's. Then Isaac asked again: *Art thou my very son Esau* (verse 24a)? And now Jacob lied the third time – *I am* (24b). Surely, this was not the way of the LORD for God could never be a part of such a wicked scheme.

Isaac trusted his senses rather than to obey the will of God and that was to bless Jacob instead of Esau. His suspicion of Esau returning unusually earlier than other times before was good but in ascertaining his suspicion, he relied solely on his sense of touch, hearing, taste, and smell. He was completely blind. Moreover, he craved for Esau's savoury meat to satisfy his gastronomic desire. All these numbed his awareness of God's revealed will that *the elder shall serve the younger* (25:23).

Ultimately, Isaac bestowed on Jacob the blessing of the firstborn (vv. 28, 29). Convinced that it was Esau, Isaac blessed Jacob. He pronounced the LORD'S blessing upon the land that the dew of heaven (rain) would water the earth and enhance its fertility to give plenty provisions. People would serve him and be subject to him. He would be lord over his brethren, and *cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee*. We see that this

blessing included the covenant blessings which God had bestowed on Abraham and Isaac (17:1-8; 26:2-5).

Esau Begs His Father to Bless Him

This transference of the blessing of the firstborn was a very important occasion. It was customary to perform such a joyous occasion before the other members of the family and other people. But here it was done privately and secretly between father and son only. Isaac had pronounced the blessing of *his soul* upon Jacob that his agricultural venture would be successful, that other nations and his brother would serve him, and that whoever should curse him would be cursed and whoever bless him would be blessed. Isaac transferred all his wealth to Jacob. Although Isaac's intended action to bless Esau ran counter to God's revealed will, God's plan and purposes could never be thwarted despite the method employed by sinful men. In the providence of God Jacob was so blessed and not Esau. This teaches us that God is in control over the affairs of man in every age of human history until the final consummation of His eternal plan.

Esau came back from hunting. He prepared the venison and presented himself before Isaac. When it dawned upon Isaac that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau, he *trembled very exceedingly*. The Hebrew text reads "trembled, tremblingly and

exceedingly". In other words, Isaac was violently shaken. He was brought to the realization that he had sinned and violated the divine oracle. This explains why Isaac told Esau that he had blessed Jacob, and declared that *yea, and he shall be blessed* (v. 33). It also explains why Isaac refused to revoke the first blessing and give Esau a similar blessing. Isaac repented for he had stood up against Rebekah, who favoured Jacob, had refused to discuss the matter of blessing Esau with Rebekah, knowing that she would object, and that he preferred Esau to Jacob being aware of God's revealed will.

Esau wept bitterly (v.34). He claimed that Jacob had supplanted him by taking his birthright and blessing. - the birthright which he had sold to Jacob. In fact, he had no cause to cry and be bitter about it. He should have told his father that he had sold his birthright and blessing to Jacob. But who does not want such a blessing—to inherit all the wealth and blessing of the father, and more (vv. 28, 29)! Nevertheless Isaac blessed Esau and restated the divine oracle that he would serve his younger brother Jacob. It was recorded that *by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come* (Hebrews 11:20). There was no mention of Isaac's faults. God had forgiven him. O, the grace of the LORD our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, His Only Begotten Son!

Esau Intends to Kill Jacob

Esau hated Jacob. In a fit of anger, he purposed in his heart to kill Jacob. How true it is that when we are angry we often make foolish decisions, which we will later regret. Taking revenge is not God's way. Vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19). If Esau was right and Jacob had wrongfully robbed him of his blessing, then God would surely deal with Jacob.

Esau's intention came to the ears of Rebekah. She quickly told Jacob about his brother's intention and advised him to flee to Laban, Rebekah's brother and to stay there until Esau's anger subsided. She remarked that if Jacob stayed on she might lose both of them—Esau would kill Jacob and Esau would face the death penalty. Observe that Rebekah attributed the whole thing to Jacob, stating that *which thou hast done to him* (v. 45). She put the blame squarely on Jacob. Jacob did not protest. His separation from his mother lasted twenty years. Rebekah never saw him again.

Rebekah now had to get Isaac's consent. She did not confess about her scheme with Jacob to deceive him. What excuse could she present to Isaac for Jacob's departure to Padan-Aram? Her quick thinking mind once again prompted her to hide the whole truth. She mentioned that she was afraid that Jacob might marry a Canaanite woman, and that would grieve her to death. Life was already intolerable with Esau's two

Hittite wives. Although that was true, it was not the whole truth. She did not report that Esau was bent on killing Jacob because the latter had supplanted him and robbed him of his blessing.

What contributed to the breakdown of the family ties? We have observed that in the beginning the parents had played favourites. It would appear that Esau and Jacob did not communicate with each other in this chapter. In fact in all the six scenes the family never gathered as an entire family. It was either Isaac or Esau together, Rebekah and Jacob, Isaac and Jacob or Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah never met Esau and Esau never met Jacob! Communication had broken down. There was tension in the home. There was no trust in one another. They resorted to lies to get their way. This is because they did not trust God as Abraham did. They did not do the will of God and if they did it was done through stealth and deceit.

PRACTICAL VALUE

When we started reading this chapter, there is no question that Isaac was going against the revealed will of God that the younger Jacob should have the pre-eminence over his elder brother Esau. But we learn that God will not let any human to thwart His plan and purpose. Jacob was blessed instead of Esau, although the way it happened was not right. It was costly for Rebekah and

Jacob for sinful act of deceiving Isaac. However, this chapter illustrates God's control of human affairs that will ultimately result in the fulfilment of His revealed will. So we take comfort and assurance that whatever men may say against or do not believe in our hope of resurrection of our bodies in the day of the Lord, it will happen in God's time because He has revealed and promised to us (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:20, 21). What a glorious day it will be when all the saints gather together on the Day of the LORD!

Another valuable lesson which we can learn here is how to have a harmonious and happy family. Mutual respect is an essential ingredient in maintaining harmony in the family. In Isaac's family there was an absence of this ingredient. This is evident by the way they treated one another. Isaac was obsessed with his self-righteousness and self-gratification; Rebekah was so dedicated to her own ends even to the extent of humiliating her husband and blatantly manipulating her son Jacob, who was willing to lie to his father; and Esau should have readily accepted his forfeiture of his birthright instead of hating Jacob with intent to kill him. The family was fraught with ambition, envy, lying, deceit, coveting, malice, manipulation, stubbornness and stupidity. All these sins we must avoid

and be aware that they do not encroach in our family relationships.

Genesis 27 teaches us valuable lessons for a happy and harmonious family. Know God, obey Him, and do things in the way which pleases Him. We need to trust Him and when we confess our faults one to another God will bring about peace and harmony in the family.

An important practical lesson is to learn to trust the LORD our God and not to try to help Him to achieve His plan and purpose. More often we will use unrighteous ways to do the will of God and excuse ourselves. Did not Rebekah and Jacob fulfil the will of God? Yes, but they did it a sinful way. God cannot be a party to their deceitful scheme. For example, it is not alright to lie in our business transactions in order to clinch the deals so that we can fulfil God's will that we provide for our family (1 Timothy 5:8). It is important not to displease God by breaking His commandment but to trust Him. Yes, it requires faith and discipline on our part. God knows and sees and He is faithful to keep His word and promises (Deuteronomy 11:27; Matthew 6:3; James 1:25).
AMEN