

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

..... *GENESIS*



God's Kingdom despite God's People, Again Genesis 27-28:9

Pastor Anthony Ferguson

Today's theme is not new, church family. I have titled today's sermon "God's Kingdom despite God's People, Again." Really, this could have been the title of several of my past sermons. Constantly, we are seeing in Genesis that God establishes his kingdom despite our weakness and sinfulness and that this reality highlights God's amazing grace and goodness. We will see this idea again today.

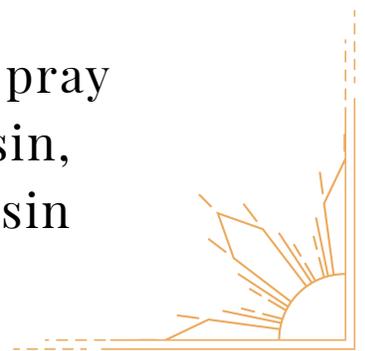
The story that we are investigating today is the story of Rebekah and Jacob tricking blind Isaac into blessing Jacob. The tempo behind this story is the brokenness of God's people. We see it in many ways and in each of the characters. Interestingly, this tempo is structured in a very intentional way. Notice the following structure:

Blessing (27:1-4)

- Trick (27:5-27)
 - Blessing (27:28-29)
 - Reaction (27:30-41)
- Trick (27:42-46)
 - Blessing (28:1-5)
 - Reaction (28:6-10)

Church family, the biblical authors love, love to repeat themselves, and here we see Moses repeat himself twice. Repetition is one reason why reading the Bible, especially, the prophets and especially a book like Revelation, is so difficult for us to interpret. We do not understand the concept of repetition. The biblical authors repeat themselves to provide us with a full-orbed picture of the topic under consideration. When comforted with repetition in the Bible, like we have here, we need to do two things: pinpoint the similarities and the differences. The similarities in these verses is the theme brokenness. The similarities highlight one important difference between these passages: God's blessings are for broken people. This is the main idea of today's sermon.

The main application for today is this: let's pray with passion that God would keep us from sin, but when we do sin, let's beg God that our sin would not hurt others.



Let's now investigate these realities in Genesis 27-28:9.

THE PATHWAY TO BLESSING (GENESIS 27:1-4)

These verses begin with Isaac telling Esau to hunt game so that Isaac might eat and bless him. Interestingly, a meal was not needed for Isaac to bless Esau. When Jacob later blesses two of Joseph's sons in Genesis 48, a meal is not required. Again, when Pharaoh asks Jacob to bless him, there is no mention of a meal prior to the blessings. We, thus, seem to be seeing again in these verses that the pathway to Isaac's heart is his stomach. This fact makes us weary although blessings typically flow from a happy tummy, right. Isn't it the case that we are very prone to complementing a chief after a good meal? Thus, the fact that Isaac requests a meal from Esau could be a sign of trouble. It is not certain.

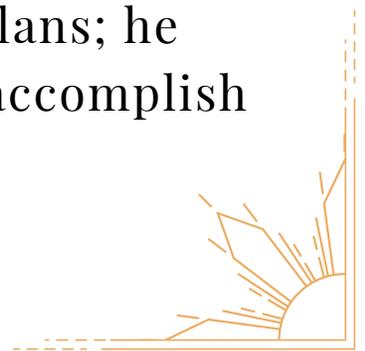
REBEKAH'S TRICK (GENESIS 27:5-27)

Although we are not sure if Isaac's request for a meal signifies trouble, trouble is certainly coming. Rebekah overhears this Isaac's conversation



with Esau and Rebekah and develops a tricky scheme. You see, God told Rebekah while she was pregnant that Esau was going to serve Jacob (Genesis 25:33). Yet, the possibility of Isaac blessing Esau calls this promise into question. This clashing creates an amazing opportunity, an opportunity that we have discussed in the last few weeks. In this moment, Rebekah can glorify God in her obedient faith – this is what Abraham did in Genesis 22 with Isaac. She can trust that God will accomplish his promises despite what she is hearing. Or Rebekah can resort to “helping God out” – this is what Abraham did in Genesis 16 with Hagar. Rebekah chooses to “help God out.”

She decides to “help God” keep his promises by disguising Jacob as Esau. This decision indicates a high view of man and a low view of God! In this plan, Rebekah portrays that God needs help, her help. In other words, Rebekah thinks that in order for God to come true on his promises, he needs her to resort to deceit and tricks. Thinking that God needs us to sin to accomplish his will is a high view of man and a low view of God. This worldview is wrong. God does not need deceit and tricks to accomplish his plans; he doesn't need anything or anyone. He will accomplish his plans.



Now notice Jacob's reply to his mother's tricky scheme in verse 11. He asks about a potential loophole: "What if he feels me?" This possibility could be very concerning since Esau is hairy and Jacob was not. Notice that Jacob is not bothered by the deceit, trick, or lie of Rebekah; rather, he is concerned about himself. He is worried that this plan might result in him being cursed, not blessed. This selfish fear is alleviated though when Rebekah, his mother, announces that she will take his curse. Jacob's reply is cowardly and selfish.

THE BLESSING (GENESIS 27:28-29)

Jacob and Rebekah's plan works although Isaac tests his skin to see if it is hairy (27:21) and smells him to see if he smells like Esau (27:27). Isaac is tricked into blessing Jacob with a threefold blessing. This blessing includes,

- Lots of rain and fertile land for an abundance of grain and wine (27:28)
- Lordship over other nations and over his brothers (27:29)
- Protection from enemies (27:29)

These blessings pronounce wealth and security for Jacob.

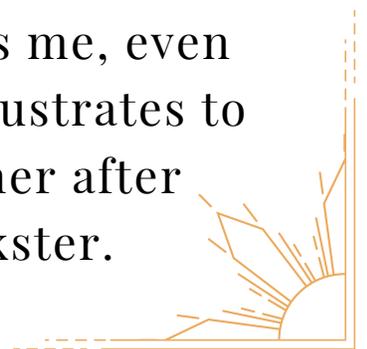


THE REACTION (GENESIS 27:30-41)

This deceitful thievery results produces a painful reality. We see that once Isaac realizes that he blessed Jacob rather than Esau, he reacts first with great trembling (27:33). The ESV translates this by saying, “Isaac trembled very violently.” The manner in which Isaac trembled is intense. In fact, Moses is describing this in one of the most emphatic ways possible! Imagine him literally shaking abundantly. We could communicate the reality of this sentence with several exclamation marks after it: “Isaac trembled very violently!!!”

Similarly, look how Moses describes Esau’s reaction in verse 34. The ESV translates his reaction by saying, “he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry.” Esau is crying the essence of dread and sadness, and he is doing so greatly, very bitterly. There is so much energy in this construction. When we read this, we see the despair (27:34).

This tone has woven throughout the next several verses. Notice the end of verse 34. Esau says, “Bless me, even me.” The repetition of the pronoun “me” illustrates to us his despair. Esau cries in the same manner after he and Isaac briefly identify Jacob as a trickster. He says in verse 38, “Bless me, even me.”



Amid this pain, Isaac blesses Esau. The blessing consists of the following

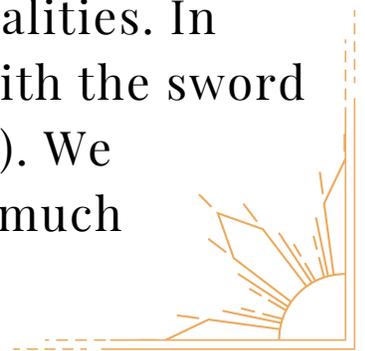
- Esau will live away from the rain and the fertile land (27:39) since this blessing is given to Jacob (27:28)
- Esau will live by the sword (27:40)
- He will serve his brother, as promised to Jacob (27:29) but not forever. He will rebel against him (27:40)

Notice that this blessing is in one sense a curse. Jacob and Rebekah's trick results in utter animosity between these brothers and their descendants.

Rebekah's attempt to "help God out" resulted in devastating consequences. Let's explore those consequences now.

Consequences: Esau's descendants became the nation of Edom while Jacob's became the nation of Israel. Did you know that Edom and Israel had a hostile history? Edom served Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon, but later, they broke away by the sword (doesn't this sound like Isaac's blessing of Esau [Gen 27:40])? Thus, Rebekah's attempts to "help God out" result in perpetual conflict between these brothers.

There is more though, even more painful realities. In Amos 1, we learn that they pursued Israel with the sword and showed no mercy to them (Amos 1:11-12). We learn in Obadiah that Edom hated Israel so much that when God's people were conquered in



battle, Edom stood far off and even profited because of their destruction (Obadiah 10-14). Thus, Rebekah's attempts to "help God out" result in a deadly perpetual conflict between these brothers.

There is more. Edom's hatred toward Israel leads God to announce that Edom is a nation that the Lord is angry with forever (Malachi 1:4). When God judges them, there is no hope for them. Malachi makes this point clear in Malachi 1. Rebekah's attempts to "help God out" perpetuated this end.

APPLICATION

Church family, when your circumstances and God's promises appear to clash, do not resort to "helping God" out. In the upcoming weeks, this pandemic may cause a clash where some of us conclude that if I am going to be provided for, I must hoard. Church family resist this erg and share. Right now, some of you may be thinking that if I am going to be provided for, I am going to disconnect from the church family and escape into isolation. Indeed, we should be wise, but by God's grace we have ample ways to stay connected amid a pandemic. Connect.

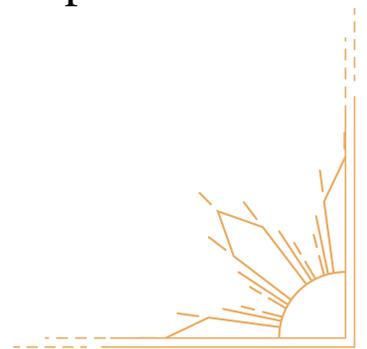
GOD'S CONTROL:

Church family, God is in control of all things, and Rebekah's sin did not catch God off guard. In God's sovereign plan



REBEKAH'S TRICK (GENESIS 42:42-46)

Rebekah and Jacob's scheme has produced epic grief and intense hatred. Thus, Rebekah is again confronted with a dilemma. God promised that Esau would serve Jacob, but the promise is broken if Jacob is dead. Again, Rebekah is in a position where God's promises clash with reality. She can respond in one of two ways: 1) Her trust in God's promises can lead to obedience, or 2) her faithlessness can lead to continue disobedience. She again decides the second option. Notice how she again tells Jacob what to do. She commands him not to deal with the ramification of his sin, but to run from his sin (27:42-45). Then, she lies to Isaac, again. She suggests that Jacob should be sent to Haran to get a wife. Moreover, she manipulates Isaac by appealing to the quality of her life (27:46). In other words, she tells Isaac to let Jacob leave or else she will be very sad. This is not the truth! The truth is she wants Jacob to leave to save his life, not to get a wife. Rebekah again turns to a trick to sort out her problems.



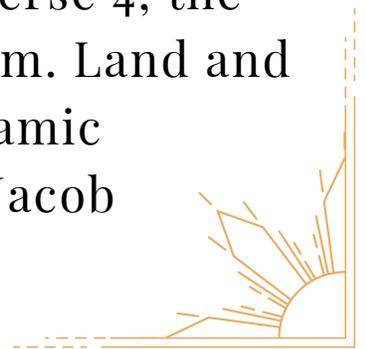
THE BLESSING (28:1-5)

Isaac responds permits Rebekah's request. He commands Jacob to journey to Haran to take a wife from Laban's family (28:1-3).

Then, Isaac blesses Jacob with the Abrahamic blessings. The previous blessing was an announcement that Jacob would have lots of wealth, prestige, and protection. That was not the Abrahamic blessing. This blessing is different. Here Isaac announces that the Abrahamic promises will be passed onto Jacob, not Esau. Several things demonstrate this point.

First, notice verse 3. Jacob asks that the Lord might bless Jacob. The previous blessing does not come from the Lord. Nowhere in Genesis 27:28-29 does Isaac speak for the Lord or request that the Lord would fulfill his blessing. Rather, Isaac asks the Lord to bless Jacob in verse 3. Similarly, in verse 4, Isaac asks that God would give to Jacob the blessing of Abraham.

Second, notice the nature of these promises. In verse 3, the blessing is for lots of offspring and in verse 4, the blessing is for the land promised to Abraham. Land and descendants are the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, and now Isaac is asking that the Jacob would receive these promise.

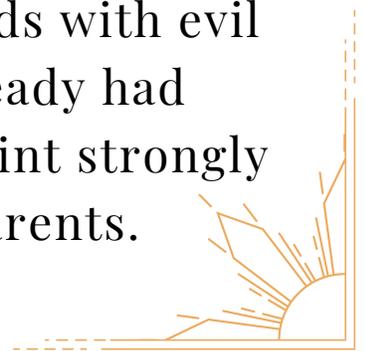


Third, observe how Moses describes the promise in verse 4. He calls it the blessing of Abraham. Now the blessing for Abraham is not just the land, but offspring too. Let's observe briefly the structure of verses 3-4. Each verse begins with the request for God to bless. Then, Isaac describes the blessing. Finally, Isaac provides the purpose of the blessings. Both verses repeat the same idea twice: Isaac is requesting that the Abrahamic covenant be passed onto Isaac.

Let's notice one further point from this section, church family. Isaac calls the Lord, the Almighty God in verse 3. We saw God reveal himself to Abraham in Genesis 17 as the Almighty God. The point here is that God has the strength to accomplish his plan. Why does God make this point here? He makes this point because of the moral weakness of Jacob. God is so almighty that he can make his covenant stand even when with broken people like Jacob.

THE REACTION (28:6-10)

Finally, let's observe how Esau reacts to Isaac blessing Jacob and sending him to Haran. He responds with evil intent. He marries another women – he already had wives. The inclusion of this detail at this point strongly suggests that Esau did this in spite of his parents. In other words, he did this to hurt them.

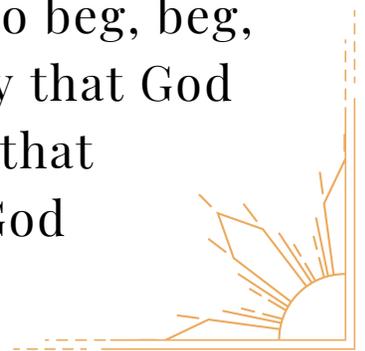


CONCLUSION

Church family, we see in these verses several incredible realities. First, God is sovereign over our sin and gracious to sinners. He establishes his covenant despite us. He is the Almighty God who can do this despite our moral bankruptcy.

Second, this reality is not an excuse to sin. No one in their right mind listens to these verses or this sermon and thinks, “Yay, now I have an excuse to be morally bankrupt.” Listen, did you hear the horrors of Rebekah’s sin. Here we have a mother with misplaced appetites who tries to help God out, and the result is the damnation of Esau and his people. Esau is one of the villains in the OT. The author of Hebrews makes this point in Hebrews 11-12. There he tells the church to have the faith of the OT saints. Be like them. Then, he says in Hebrews 12, do not be like Esau. In other words, the saints of Hebrews 11 have saving faith, but Esau did not. Church family, sin has consequences, horrible consequences.

Therefore, church family, we should rejoice that God is good to us despite ourselves. We should also beg, beg, beg God to be gracious to us still. Let’s pray that God would keep us from sinning, and let’s pray that when we do sin, for we will, let’s beg that God would not let us hurt other people.



PRAYER

Oh God, we need you desperately. Thank you first that you are a gracious and kind God. Thank you that you magnify your grace in our life by forgiving us and doing good to us despite us. Now, we humbly ask that you keep us from sin. When we are tempted to “help you out,” please give us the grace to resist this erg. When we do sin, please be gracious to those whom are sin affects. Please, do not let our sin hurt anyone at all. Please God we pray in Jesus name, amen.