

Isaac's Descendants

Jacob's Deception of Isaac

Genesis 27:1-45

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Scripture

Last week we began a series of sermons on “Isaac’s Descendants.” In our first lesson we saw that Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. As a young man, Esau despised his birth-right and sold it to his twin brother, Jacob. Later, Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, and received the blessing that Isaac intended to give his older son, Esau.

Let’s read about Jacob’s deception of Isaac in Genesis 27:1-45:

¹ When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. ³ Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, ⁴ and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”

⁵ Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, ⁷ ‘Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die.’ ⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. ⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.” ¹¹ But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. ¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.” ¹³ His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me,

my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me.”

¹⁴ So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

¹⁸ So he went in to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.” ²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?” He answered, “Because the Lord your God granted me success.” ²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not.” ²² So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” ²³ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands. So he blessed him. ²⁴ He said, “Are you really my son Esau?” He answered, “I am.” ²⁵ Then he said, “Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son’s game and bless you.” So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come near and kiss me, my son.” ²⁷ So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said,

“See, the smell of my son
is as the smell of a field that the Lord has
blessed!

²⁸ May God give you of the dew of heaven
and of the fatness of the earth
and plenty of grain and wine.

²⁹ Let peoples serve you,

and nations bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow down to
you.
Cursed be everyone who curses you,
and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

³⁰ As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." ³² His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." ³³ Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." ³⁴ As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" ³⁵ But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." ³⁶ Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" ³⁷ Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" ³⁸ Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him:

"Behold, away from the fatness of the earth
shall your dwelling be,
and away from the dew of heaven on high.
⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live,

and you shall serve your brother;
but when you grow restless
you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

⁴¹ Now Esau hated 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 approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” ⁴² But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, “Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran ⁴⁴ and stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury turns away— ⁴⁵ until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?” (Genesis 27:1-45)

Introduction

Gordon Wenham says, “This is one of the most gripping stories in Genesis.”¹ And James Montgomery Boice says, “There is probably no more pathetic episode in Genesis than Jacob’s deception of Isaac to gain his father’s blessing.”²

The story really began before the birth of the twin boys. God told Rebekah, when she was struggling during her pregnancy, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). Isaac was aware that God had chosen Jacob as the one through whom his covenant blessings would flow. Esau, the older twin, showed that he despised his birthright because he sold his birthright to Jacob for some bread

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, “Genesis,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 79.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 752.

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and lentil stew when he had come home famished from hunting.

A second indication that Esau despised his birthright happened when Esau was forty years old, because he took Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite to be his second wife (Genesis 26:34). This was in clear defiance of God's command not to marry Canaanites. In fact, Abraham had sent his servant 400 miles to find Rebekah—a non-Canaanite—to become Isaac's wife. Moses noted that Esau and his wives made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:35).

It is clear that Isaac, Rebekah, and their twin sons, Esau and Jacob, had problems. It is with this background that I want us to examine Jacob's deception of Isaac.

Lesson

Jacob's deception of Isaac in Genesis 27:1-45 teaches us God's sovereign, redemptive will is always done, in spite of any person's opposition to it.

Let's look at each of the four persons in this narrative:

1. Isaac's Disobedience (27:1-4)
2. Rebekah's Manipulation (27:5-17)
3. Jacob's Deception (27:18-29)
4. Esau's Unholiness (27:30-45)

I. Isaac's Disobedience (27:1-4)

First, let's look at Isaac's disobedience.

Moses said in verses 1-2, **“When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, ‘My son’; and he answered, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death.’”** I think that when most of us read this we think of

Isaac on his deathbed. However, although Isaac was 137 years old, he actually lived another 43 years, because Genesis 35:28 says that Isaac died when he was 180 years old! Undoubtedly, Isaac's eyesight was poor, but he still had many years left to live.

It seems that the issue was that Isaac was determined to pass his blessing along to his firstborn, Esau. He knew that it was God's will to pass the covenant blessing to Jacob. However, in disobedience to God, he determined to pass it to his favorite son, Esau. The giving of a blessing was associated with a meal, and so Isaac said to Esau in verses 3-4, **“Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”**

Isaac did not want Rebekah to know what he was doing and so he had decided to dispense his blessing to Esau secretly. What normally was a joyful and public occasion was going to be an empty and private ceremony.

When we think of the three patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—we tend to think well of Isaac, don't we? We know a lot about Abraham and Jacob, but not so much about Isaac. We think of Isaac being a willing sacrifice offering, and the beautiful Rebekah coming to be his bride. However, Isaac was a deeply flawed and sinful man. He knew about God's prophecy to Rebekah that the covenant blessing would go to the younger twin. And yet Isaac defiantly disobeyed the clear will of God and sought to pass the blessing along to his rebellious son, Esau.

God has given us the complete revelation of his will in Scripture. Let us never walk in deliberate, defiant disobedience of God as he has revealed himself to us in his Word.

II. Rebekah's Manipulation (27:5-17)

Second, notice Rebekah's manipulation.

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Rebekah immediately jumped into high gear as soon as Esau left on his hunting expedition. She told Jacob about Isaac's conversation with Esau. And then she told Jacob to bring her **two good young goats, so that she could prepare from them delicious food for his father** (27:9). Then she said that Jacob would take the meal to his father so that he could receive the blessing. Jacob hesitated because Esau was hairy and he was not, and if Isaac detected the deception, then Jacob might be cursed instead of blessed. But Rebekah said that if that happened, she would receive the curse. And so Jacob went and did as his mother told him.

Rebekah manipulated Jacob so that he could receive Isaac's blessing. However, her failure was not trusting God to fulfill his prophecy to her about his covenantal blessing going to Jacob. She knew what God had said to her years earlier, but now that it looked like Isaac was going to disobey God, she decided that she had to manipulate circumstances to ensure that God's blessing would go to Jacob. James Montgomery Boice says, "Rebekah's real failure was spiritual. She was right in clinging to the promise of God and in perceiving that Isaac was willfully rejecting that promise in favor of his preferred son. But her fault lay in failing to trust God to bring the blessing to Jacob in his own time and way."³

Failing to trust God to fulfill his Word has devastating consequences. For example, a young professing Christian decides not to wait for a Christian spouse and marries a non-Christian. Two unequally yoked people will not be able to connect spiritually.

Rebekah should have trusted God to fulfill his prophecy about Jacob. God would have ensured that the blessing go to Jacob, without Rebekah having to resort to manipulation. She suffered for her failure. After Jacob's deception of Isaac, Jacob was sent to find a wife at Rebekah's brother, Laban's home in Paddan-aram. She never saw her favorite son again.

Boice says, "If you are not trusting God and are therefore

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary*, 754.

trying to do your will instead of his, or even his will in your own way, learn that the plottings of sin never work out and that the path of disobedience is always rocky.... It is better to wait for God at the beginning.”⁴

III. Jacob's Deception (27:18-29)

Third, observe Jacob's deception.

Jacob was not simply doing the bidding of his mother because he was a young child. He was, in fact, 77 years old! He voluntarily deceived his father in order to receive his blessing.

In verses 18-19 Moses said that Jacob **“went in to his father and said, ‘My father.’ And he said, ‘Here I am. Who are you, my son?’ Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.’”** One can almost sense Jacob's nervousness. *Hurry up and eat, Dad. And then bless me. Quick! Esau will be back soon!*

In verse 20 Isaac said to his son, **“How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?” He answered, “Because the Lord your God granted me success.”** This is utter blasphemy! Jacob invoked God's name to promote his deception. Interestingly, Jacob consistently used language similar to **“the Lord your God”** in his early life (cf. 31:5, 42; 32:9). It was not until his return from Haran, more than twenty years later, when he spoke of the Lord as *his own* God (cf. 28:20-22; 33:18-20).

Eventually, Isaac ate the food provided by Jacob. And then he blessed him with abundant crops, political supremacy, and reciprocal curses and blessings.

However, shortly after Esau returned and indicated that he wanted to kill his brother, Jacob fled to Haran. More than twenty years later, he returned back to the Promised Land. He fearfully

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary*, 754.

met Esau along the way, bowed down to him and called him his lord. James Montgomery Boice says, “The blessing that Jacob stole said that he was to be ‘lord’ over his brothers and that ‘the sons’ of his mother were to bow to him. Yet, before Esau called Jacob his lord, Jacob thus saluted him (Gen. 32:18; 33:8, 13–15). And before Esau ever bowed to Jacob, Jacob bowed low before Esau (Gen. 33:3). Truly, the path of sin is hard, and the pleasure of sin is never worth the price that must be paid for it.”⁵

IV. Esau’s Unholiness (27:30-45)

And finally, let’s see Esau’s unholiness.

Moses said in verses 30-31, **“As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, ‘Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that you may bless me.’”** Of course, Isaac was surprised to learn that Esau had returned. Then he realized that he had been deceived. He then came to understand that Jacob would be blessed because he said at the end of verse 33, **“...Yes, and he *shall* be blessed.”**

Verse 34 says, **“As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father!’”** Sidney Greidanus said, “So Isaac decides to try to bless his son Esau as well, but the words that come out of his mouth are hardly a blessing; they are more like a negative blessing, the opposite of what he had promised Jacob.”⁶

The writer to the Hebrews warns us about Esau’s unholiness

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 755.

⁶ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 277.

in Hebrews 12:15–17, where he says, “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.”

Let us never despise the grace of God, as Esau did.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Jacob’s deception of Isaac in Genesis 27:1-45, we may be assured that God’s sovereign, redemptive plan can never be derailed.

God never approves of disobedience, manipulation, deception, and unholiness to accomplish his redemptive purposes. However, God uses even human sin to accomplish his sovereign, redemptive purpose. The supreme example is the crucifixion of Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached to the crowd and said in Acts 2:22–24, “Jesus of Nazareth..., delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” God’s sovereign, redemptive will is always done, in spite of any person’s opposition to it. Jesus died to pay the penalty for sin once for all. And God accepted his sacrifice and raised him back to life to save sinners like us.

Let us never resort to disobedience, manipulation, deception, and unholiness in our lives, but let us be assured that God’s sovereign, redemptive plan can never be derailed. Amen.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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