

**Genesis 26; 34 and 35; A Grief to Isaac & Rebekah”, Sermon # 79 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 4th, 2018,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

A question may have come to your mind as to why these last two verses of Chapter 26 are placed here. They appear to be tacked on to the narrative and do not seem relate to all that has gone before. The answer, I believe is that the Lord would show us that even though Isaac had been blessed by God in so many ways and had become prosperous, even though he had made this covenant of good will with Abimelech, and had good relations with people in positions of authority in the land that he lived; nevertheless he and Rebekah had “grief of mind” in relation to what their son Esau had done in taking these heathen women to be his wives.

Esau’s covenant with them showed the treachery of his heart toward God and his parents. These verses are here to show us that our Christian life, although it is filled with the great joys of what God has done for us, and what He is doing for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, it also has sorrows attendant to it that are a result either of our own sins, or our relatives sins, which cause this grief of mind that is mentioned in our text. They are the sorrows that come to us as a result of the poor and sinful decisions that some of our children may make as they are growing up, and particularly with regard to who they are going to marry.

We cannot always prevent our children from making mistakes in judgment in regard to the person that they marry, but certainly out of concern their spiritual welfare and the honor that a wise decision will bring to God and to them, we ought to try. And further, we ought to try because our deep love for them; wanting the very best for them. Esau was a man who was profane the Scriptures say in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 16. To be profane is to consciously despise God and His counsel; to disdain Him in the most important and significant decisions that you make in your life.

It is the indication of a very bad heart when children strive to go against their godly parent's wisdom and advice in relation to courtship and marriage. This morning we will be looking at Esau as a negative example. In what ways should young people of godly parents, who want to be married, be the opposite of what Esau was like in this situation? They should be the opposite of Esau in these 3 ways.

1st of all – Young people should think about marriage in light of all that their godly parents have taught them. (Genesis 26: 34 and 35)

It was when Esau was 40 years old that these events came to pass. “He took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite as wives.” “And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.” He was old enough to know better and he was old enough to have heard the teaching of his parents concerning this subject. Isaac had, no doubt, told him the story of Abraham and his being called from the Ur of the Chaldees, and how God had given him the precious and magnificent promises of eternal life. Isaac told Esau and Jacob how important it was to the fulfillment of these promises.

It was so important that when it came time for Abraham to die that he had charged his servant when he sent him to the city of Nahor to his relatives there, he said to them: “Swear to me by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” The Canaanites were idolaters and those who were under the curse of God from the days of Noah. Abraham and Isaac knew that marrying a Canaanite would bring about the distinct possibility that God and the true worship of God would be forgotten or laid aside.

This is very displeasing to God when those who have heard that He is holy, and that He seeks men to worship Him and serve Him in accordance with His Word, that they then turn from that knowledge to go their own way, and make their own decisions. Isaac certainly had been faithful to

this sacred trust of heeding his father's words to him. If he had not been, his wife would probably not have had the same desires to live righteously, to live by the same faith that he had, and many corrupt and worldly practices would have entered in to their lives and their household. Isaac had received this good teaching, and he had come to see that his father's teaching was wise and good. It led to holiness and a close walk with God. He had raised his sons to understand this. Esau had most definitely heard this and been taught this, but it held no weight and no value with him. He did not believe in this God who made men wander all over the land with no place to settle. He was not impressed with the plainness and the simplicity of the worship of God.

He wanted something more entertaining and impressive out of life. Esau was very impressed with the daughters of Beerli and Elon who were princes and men of authority among the Hittites. He knew that his father thought that the Hittites were the worst of the Canaanites, but he himself could see that having a connection with these girls would bring him closer to these men of power and prestige. And this is what he wanted. He wanted to be a man of renown himself. And this was the best way to get ahead in society and to make progress. All this "God stuff" was going to keep him from becoming everything that he really desired to become. It would isolate him from others, and it would make them think that he was out of touch with the important things in life.

He was a man of action, and he thought that he was old enough to make his own decisions in life. He didn't think that he needed to consult with his father or mother about this. Mom wouldn't understand, and Dad wouldn't agree with his reasoning. But it was his life, and they couldn't stop him in this. He would go ahead and marry these girls. They were beautiful, and they came from families of money and power. He would have it made. And so he went ahead and married them without his parent's permission. And the divine comment is, "they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah."

Grief, in this case, was the thoughts and emotions of sorrow that came to Esau's parents because they had lost something that was precious to them. Esau had rejected their teaching and the testimony of their living their lives by faith in God and faith in His revealed Word to them. Grief was in their minds, because they now had to endure the rejection of their faith by others besides Esau himself, because of this marriage. And this was coming to them from their first born son; the one who they cared for very deeply. But they knew that they could not change his mind concerning this matter. They could not undo what he had gone ahead and done, in disregard for their teaching.

This brought dire consequences to Esau personally, and it brought this grief to his parents. They were losing him in relation to all that they held dear. And what a great loss it was. They could see very clearly that Esau not loving God, or them enough to listen, they would not be able to share with him or his wives all the joys and hopes and struggles of what it meant to be a pilgrim on the earth. They would not be able to speak with him about the struggles related to their faith in God, or what it would mean to look to God for every good thing that He would bring. Isaac and Rebekah had probably told Esau that this is how they had met and married. It was by faith in the promises of God. They had no doubt told him that it was the right way.

And so, if he had listened to them, it could have been God's way for Esau as well. It could have been good for him as well. But this decision not only jeopardized his earthly spiritual well-being, it jeopardized his eternal destiny. Because of Esau's rejection of this important principle, of receiving God's word to take heed to it and do it, they both should have now feared that Esau would lose his soul. I think that his mother did fear this. But I think that even after Esau took these wives, that Isaac thought that somehow Esau would still inherit his blessing, even if Rebekah had received the oracle and answer from God; that, "the older shall serve the younger."

It grieved Isaac to see that Esau was going the way of the world and the way of the flesh, but he still loved him, and because of his love for him, he still hoped that Esau would inherit his blessing. Sometimes parents hope for the best things and pray for their children's eternal well-being without ever saying a word to them about it. They want them to make right spiritual decisions and they

love them dearly, but the young person is determined to go their own way, and make up their own mind about what is right for them in this life. And if they let them go their own way without questioning them over it or pointing out the Bible way, it will not lead to a good conclusion of things. We must pray fervently for God to give our child the grace to see things clearly, but we should also then instruct them in the principles of righteousness and plead with them to receive the Bible truth and hold fast to our instruction.

Young people, it is God's will that you receive your parent's instruction on these important matters of courtship and marriage. The person that God would have you to marry might not at all fit the picture of what you first conceive in your mind of what a husband or wife should look like. It is not a woman's physical beauty, or the riches and prestige that she has been raised with in her parent's household, that will bring godliness or happiness to a household that 2 young people will make together in marriage. It is in a young man's heart, first of all, that God will give grace, according to His will and purpose. And in connection with that young man's prayers, God can work to have him look for an inward beauty in the girl that he is considering.

When God is working, he will think about and pray for, the one who will be willing to pursue God with him. That young man is made willing to think about what would be the right thing, and the good thing to do in all situations. It will be his thoughts, his words, and the actions that will take to establish God's truth and God's grace in that marriage. That will make all the difference. He will be a young man who will not be a grief of mind to his godly parents or his parents-in-law to be.

And young ladies, take notice. The young man who wants to take you to do many exciting worldly things with him, but who is not willing to come to church with you, or read the Bible, or pray with you, it is hard to imagine that he will make a good and faithful and godly husband. That young man will have his own selfish interests that he will be pursuing, and you will find in time, that he will become a grief to your parents, and to you, if you accept his view of what is important in life. Rather, it will be the young man who places God first, even before his job, his future, or anything that he desires to become in this life, that is the man that will make a good husband for you.

Why would anyone want to grieve their godly parents in a matter like this, unless God is going to take 2nd place in their lives? May each young person here consider what I am saying and pray to respond in the right way to their parent's instruction.

2nd – Young people should want to contribute to the well-being of the family that they have come from. (Genesis 27: 46)

We find a good indication of how these daughters-in-law affected Rebekah here in Chapter 27, verse 46, where we find her saying to Isaac: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" It is true that in the context of these verses that Rebekah is trying hard to find a reason that will convince Isaac to send Jacob away, because she is fearful that Esau will try to take his life, because Jacob stole his blessing, and she was an accomplice to it.

But even with this said, we have to understand that in her reasoning with Isaac, it had to be a strong enough reason in his own mind, to persuade him. He did not disagree with Rebekah in this matter, even though he had favored Esau in the matter of the blessing. And so, we find him charging Jacob, in Genesis 28: 1, not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, and he further instructs him to go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take for himself a wife from there. And he sent him away with his blessing, to live with Laban. Isaac evidently was also "weary of life" in some ways because of the daughters of Heth; that is, with Esau's wives Judith and Basemath.

"What good will my life be", Rebekah was saying, "if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of the land?" They evidently both felt that life was not worth living if their sons married the daughters of the land. The reason for this was because these wives of Esau's were idolaters in their worship, if they worshipped at all, and they were carnal and worldly in their thinking and doing. Isaac and

Rebekah could not talk over with them any of the things that were important in life to them. They would not be interested in spiritual things, for “the carnal mind is enmity to God” and finds it dull and boring, and at many points objectionable, to speak of the things of God, His Word and His promises. This should be a real consideration, young people, in the choice of someone who you will live with for the rest of your life; that you will choose one who will fit in well with your family and be able to contribute to their well-being rather than to their discouragement.

I am not meaning to say that this person has to somehow be like someone else in the family in their personality or temperament, or in all the activities that they do. But that person will be someone who you can bring home to your parents. And they will want to talk freely with your parents about all the subjects of importance to them. There should not only be a willingness to interact but a desire to interact. Some people are obviously more shy than others, and they are more reluctant to talk about themselves. But still, there should be a willingness to interact with your parents in a genuine and friendly way.

Your parents should not be seen as a problem; either by yourself or by the person you desire to marry in this process. Your parents are there to be your helpers in wisdom, as well as guards and protectors of your moral purity. There are many things to learn about your relationship with the one whom you will marry, that God would have you to look to your parents for their advice and counsel, in the process of courtship. If you act like Esau did, and you plunge ahead recklessly into marriage, it will not only affect you and your future; it will affect your parents who desire what is good for you, in every way.

Remember that after you marry, that whether you decide to live close to your parents and the family that you grew up with, or not, that there will be many situations of interaction over the ensuing years that will really show your family what kind of a person that person is, that you married. And this will either be very good or not so good. It could even be very bad. You should try to think of what life will be like, with the person that you desire to marry, in the routine and everyday situations of life; and not just the interest that you have with that person, now. Does that person care for others around them? Do they want to spend time with your parents and siblings, as well as spending time with you?

Take stock of all the interests that both of you have; not just thinking of the two of you, but of others in your family as well. It is true that in marriage you will be leaving them, and cleaving to your wife or husband. But you should ask yourself: Will there be a good and profitable and godly relationship of sharing together spiritual things with your family in the years to come as well? This is an important consideration to godly parents who love you, and pray for God’s blessing upon you. What kinds of things will you share with them? It appears that neither Isaac nor Rebekah thought that they could share much with their daughters in law.

Then 3rd – Young people should repent of any bitterness that they might have toward their parents, and follow their counsel and advice if it is godly.

Look over at Genesis 28: 6-9 with me. It is truly amazing to what depths of depravity the human heart is capable of, especially when it has been thwarted in its own will. Esau was very bitterly disappointed in not receiving the blessing of his father Isaac. Isaac had intended to give the blessing to Esau, but he had been deceived by Jacob posing as his brother, so that he would receive it instead. And so Isaac was deceived by his own son, through the instigation of his mother, to give the blessing to Jacob. And having been convinced, he blessed Jacob with the greatest of spiritual blessings as well as the blessings of the firstborn.

There was no changing this blessing once it had been bestowed. And Esau knew it. So he was very bitter about the loss; so much so, that he wanted to kill his brother. This bitterness was acted out in the following way against his father. Even though his father had not intended that things work out this way, it says in verse 6 of chapter 28 – “Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,’ and that Jacob had

obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.” “Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.” “So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.”

This is very revealing indeed, in regard to Esau’s character. It was because of his sin of bitterness that he studied to hurt others who opposed him. He actually studied to hurt his parents because he was bitter. He became a fornicator, collecting many unbelieving wives, because he was bitter. This bitterness he held for many years and many were defiled by it. Jacob, although he had sins of his own, the Lord was leading him toward the obedience of faith in Him. He didn’t know the Lord yet, but he was receiving and acting on prevenient grace; the grace that goes before conversion. Notice, first of all, that Jacob obeyed his father when he charged him not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. He went to Padan Aram just as his father had told him to do.

What a commendable thing obedience to parents is, in these matters. You may think that you are old enough to make up your own mind about everything in your life when you are 18 and older, but if you are living in your parent’s house, it is always the good and the right thing to do, to honor your father and mother, and to submit to them in their reasonable requests to you, which are in line with what the Scriptures teach. Jacob was 40 years old, but still he obeyed, and went to Padan Aram. I wonder what your parents will ask you to do in obedience to the word of God in order to find a wife or a husband, or to prove that His will is good and acceptable and perfect? May you not refuse your parent’s reasonable and Biblical requests.

Every young person who would come to know the Lord, and be godly, should take care that they do not despise God in despising the counsel and wisdom of their parents in this regard, as Esau did. He deliberately and defiantly went out to take another wife for himself. He will not even take another wife of the daughters of Canaan, but he will take one of daughters of Ishmael instead. In other words, he deliberate sought out a way to defy his parent’s counsel. And in doing this, he caused them further grief, and thus he only sought to get revenge against everyone who had thwarted his perverse will. He will have more wives to satisfy his own lusts.

This is why he is called a fornicator in Hebrews 12: 16. This is one of the reasons that he was never able to find repentance even when he sought for it. He did not stop seeking what he himself desired to obtain. He just modified his actions so that they would appear to be justified, and he continued on, then, to pursue his own idea of what living life should be. He felt sorry for himself that he had lost the birthright and the blessing, but he would not change his way of living for himself, and of profanely despising God. His tears of false repentance were for himself alone. They were not over the fact that he had dishonored God and his parents.

Let us learn from Esau what not to do in relation to courtship and marriage. We must do what we are told in the book of Hebrews chapter 12, verses 14. “Pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” “For you know that afterward when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

Let us instead come to Jesus Christ, the “Mediator of a new covenant”, who died for sins and sinners like ourselves. Let us come to Him and ask him for a new heart and a clean heart, and for Him to renew a right spirit within us. All sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven men except the sin against the Holy Spirit. So come to him today, and find the strength and grace and wisdom to repent and to live a godly life in relation to marriage, and in relation to everything else as well. May you not linger in the shadow of death a moment longer. Come to Jesus and walk in the light.