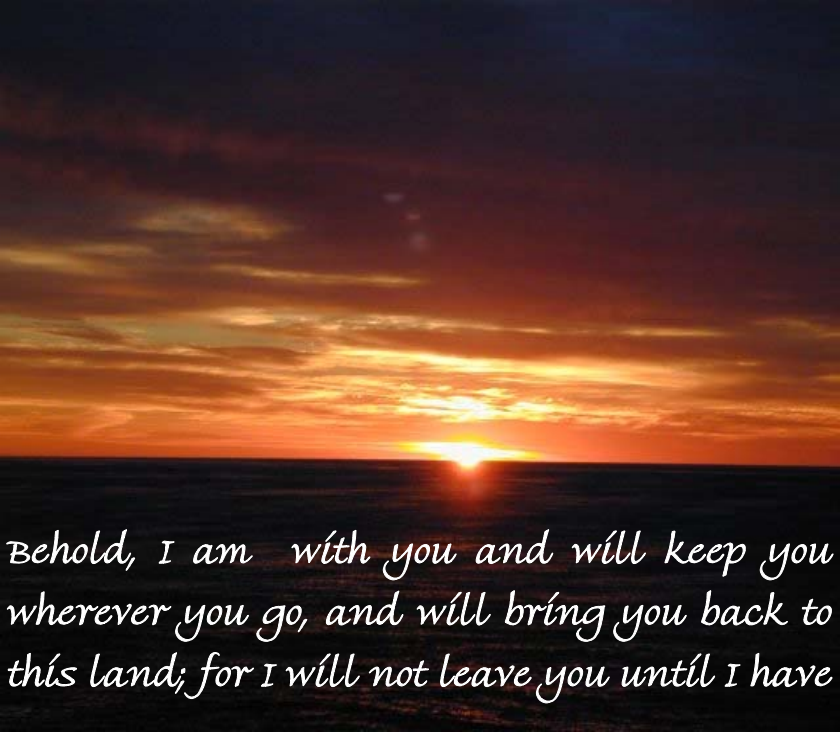




Sowing the Word



Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have

Genesis 27-28

April 1st, 2009

So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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Helpful Study Resource:

Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter

Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout
this booklet is:

With the Word Bible Commentary

by Warren W. Wiersbe.

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

Outline

Genesis Outline

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Notes for Booklet

Chapter 27 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

Isaac's condition

- It tells us Isaac is old...and in a way that is true. Yet, he will live for many more years to come. He has almost 50 years left of his life. There is something here for us to consider. Isaac's folly, his sin and carnality cause him to feel old...to feel like life is over, long before it actually is. Sin does this in lives today as well.
- Isaac is going blind. It is a physical description that is true. Yet, it seems to harbor a spiritual picture as well. Isaac's spiritual vision is small at this point and fading in his life.
- Isaac is fighting God. God's plan for Jacob and Esau was clear, from birth. Yet, here in this chapter, Isaac is actually seeking to circumvent God's revealed will. Take a moment and consider that – what is happening inside someone's head, when they know what God wants and says – but seek willfully to do the opposite.
- Isaac is carnal. One of the things that cause Isaac to make the choice he makes in this chapter is that he loves the things of the world that Esau brings him. Isaac has developed a taste for the things Esau, a very carnal man, has...and he likes it. He bases much of his decision here not on what God says...but on what his stomach likes.

Rebekah's striving

Rebekah hears what Isaac is planning to do. It is interesting to note that she adds that Isaac will bless Esau "in the presence of the Lord". Isaac did not use that phrase, yet it would be true. Rebekah seems to see more clearly here, to see the spiritual side of things...yet the sad thing is that she cannot trust God with it. God had revealed to her that Jacob would be the one the blessing would pass to...yet she sees it about to be passed to Esau. The right thing to do would be to go to the Lord with this, to pray and to wait and see how God would work this out. She could have been confident that it would have been impossible for Isaac to circumvent God's plan. She could have handled this like she did many years early, when she went to the Lord with the conflict in her womb. Yet, instead Rebekah

takes things into her own hands...to try to bring about God's will. Whenever we do this, we bring both reproach on God...and pain in lives. Isaac, Jacob, Esau and Rebekah will all feel the pain of this deception. Rebekah who loves her son so much...will end up never seeing him again. There is a lesson to learn from this, to not help God out...but know He can and will bring about His will.

Jacob's Heart

This chapter gives us a glimpse into Jacob's heart...and it is not good.

- He desires spiritual things. He wants the right of the firstborn and the blessing. We should not make light of these desires, as for Esau he despised the birthright. It was something that really did not matter to him.
- He strives for things in the flesh. Jacob's name litter speaks of one who strives, who takes a hold of things in his own might. It is something he struggles with all of his life. We see him striving in this chapter again, to gain spiritual blessings in the power and deception of the flesh. It is amazing to consider what was taking place in his heart to think that he should and could "steal" these blessings, working in his own power to bring these about in his life.
- He is a liar. As Rebekah approaches Jacob to deceive Isaac, it is sad to note that Jacob has no problem lying, his only fear is getting caught. It is a bad place in our lives when the only thing that holds us back from doing evil is the fear of getting caught.
- He does not know the Lord. It seems that although Jacob wants spiritual things, he does not yet have a personal relationship with the Lord. It is telling, when in Jacob's deception to Isaac, that he tells him that the "Lord your God" helped him. Jacob cannot and does not call him the Lord my God, or the Lord our God.

Isaac's act of faith

Isaac's life is one that is sad to me, one that never really measures up to what it could be. Yet, it is also fascinating that Isaac finds himself mentioned in Hebrews 11, showing how and where faith worked in others lives. What is even more amazing is that the event that Hebrews 11 refers to in Isaac's life is in this ugly chapter.

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.
(Hebrews 11:20)*

How could God look on Isaac's blessing in this chapter as an example of faith? It is true that Isaac was not walking by faith, but by sight as we enter

this chapter. It is true that he actually intended to defy God and His will in this chapter – but it did not happen. When Isaac realizes he has been deceived by Jacob, it tells us something interesting.

Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him— and indeed he shall be blessed." (Genesis 27:33)

Isaac does two things – one he trembles and secondly he affirms that Jacob is indeed blessed. I believe that at this moment...Isaac saw his folly, saw the folly of trying to defy God. I believe that he remembered God's declaration and now...in a wonderful moment of faith – sees what God has and affirms it.

Chapter 28 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

Isaac sends Jacob away

Rebekah manipulates Isaac again with tears and deception. Isaac responds and sends Jacob away...yet in a wild way, God works through this to get Jacob where He wants him.

Isaac blesses Jacob again

Isaac seems to be in a place now, where he agrees with God's plan to bless Jacob and joins in. In the last chapter, he sought to fight against God blessing Jacob.

Esau slow of understanding...still takes the wrong wife

Jacob's encounter with God

This is a key encounter in Jacob's life. Remember that although Jacob knows of God at this point in his life, and seems to have some desire for spiritual things – he personally does not seem to have a relationship with God. In Chapter 27 he spoke of God as Isaac's God.

Now, he has a vision, a vision that shows him personally that God is involved in this world. He sees angels working, he sees God above. This is all wonderful and has some great pictures. In John's gospel, Jesus affirms that in many ways – He is the ladder, He is the bridge between God and man. But the key thing here in Jacob's life is to see his first sight of God being real to him. He will affirm that God is there, was there – and he did not know it. He is discovering that God is real.

God's promise to Jacob.

It is interesting to read through verses 13-15 and see God's promises to Jacob. All of them were based in God, in His faithfulness. Over and over God says "I am....I will". The truth is that our relationship with God is based in His character and His faithfulness.

Jacob's vow

Although God made unconditional promises to Jacob, Jacob does not believe it. He has lived his whole life by the seat of his pants – and now sees to "make a deal with God". If God will bless him and bring him back...then God will be his God. This is the beginning of Jacob's understanding of God...but it is inadequate and not one that God validates. It is true in many of our lives, that our early attempts at a relationship with God are carnal and we often try to manipulate God. Wonderfully, this is not the relationship God makes with us – His promises to Jacob would end up being the true basis of their relationship. Question for you – what does your relationship with God look like today? Are you living on and in God's faithful character and promises, or like Jacob are you trying to make and live out a deal with God?

Q & A With Pastor Phil

Was Jacob's deception necessary to receive the blessing?

Last week we sought to deal with Jacob obtaining Esau's birthright. This week we will seek to explore the deceptive means which Jacob used to take Esau's blessing. In many ways it really is an ugly chapter with so many things at play. This subject is actually more difficult than it appears. Theologians are divided on this issue and we are unlikely to solve the problem once and for all. Hopefully, we can take some valuable applications for our own lives.

A Troubled Family

You might think that Isaac's family would be the perfect model. After all, he was the son of promise – the recipient of all the blessings of Abraham. This is the family of faith. Surely, they would have it all together, but that's not at all what we find. Instead we find a family with very real problems. It teaches us again that man is fundamentally flawed and it underscores God's grace. We are not its worthy recipients. Even the best of men are terribly undeserving of God's blessing and favor. Let's look at each member of the family in greater detail.

Isaac

Chapter 28 begins with Isaac believing that he is about to die. There are certainly reasons why he could feel this way. He is 137 years old – the same age as Ishmael when he died. Furthermore he was feeling the effects of old age as his eyesight was very dim. The strange thing is that Isaac is going to live another 43 years. We aren't given the specifics concerning his condition, but it is clear that Isaac isn't really in a good place. Moreover, he isn't thinking about spiritual things, but about Esau's food. Despite God's promise to bless Jacob, Isaac was still intent on blessing Esau and it appears that perhaps he was trying to do this in secret apart from the others. However, Rebekah overheard and began plotting her own scheme.

Rebekah

Rebekah favored Jacob. When she overheard Isaac telling Esau to bring him game so he could eat and bless him, she became fearful that God's promise concerning Jacob was in jeopardy. Her elaborate scheme was successful in deceiving her husband. Isaac's blessing was given to Jacob, but she would reap what she sowed. She would have to send Jacob away

because Esau sought to kill him for stealing the blessing. She thought this would only be a few days, but it turned out that she never saw her son again. There is a powerful lesson here about the effect our actions have upon our lives.

Jacob

Rebekah was not the only guilty one in this story of deception. Although she sought that the curse of Jacob's sin would be upon her (vs 13), Jacob was a willing participant. Jacob's concern is not whether it is right or wrong. He is only concerned with whether or not it will be successful. Although God chose to bless Jacob instead of Esau, we can see that it had nothing to do with Jacob's character. At this point, Jacob is selfish and instead of fearing God, he is only afraid of getting caught. The remainder of his life would be filled with many trials, but he would eventually learn surrender.

Esau

Esau represents the person who is completely carnal. He found favor with his father because of his skill as a hunter, but he was empty of any spiritual virtue. He impulsively sold his birthright for a morsel of food. Esau is the kind of person who willingly forfeits eternal blessings for a moment of pleasure. Though he desperately tried to regain what was lost it was gone forever. His tears were motivated by selfishness and loss not true sorrow of sin.

The Light Comes On

As we quickly survey the people involved in this account we find that none of them are really in tune with the Lord. They are all operating from their flesh. What is fascinating is that God still accomplishes His purpose. In the midst of such ugliness God continues with His plan of redemption. It is a lesson we have to learn, and often, relearn. God so often works in spite of us and it would seem that in this account, Isaac discovered this truth. Verse 33 says, "Then Isaac trembled exceedingly". What caused Isaac to be so shaken? Could it be that the light suddenly came on and that he realized that he had set himself against God's plan? Despite the fact that the word of the Lord stated that Jacob would be blessed, Isaac had resisted God's will. Suddenly he saw that it is fruitless to stand against the Lord and he finally agrees with God. At the end of verse 33, speaking of Jacob, he says, "and indeed he shall be blessed". He understood that the blessing he wanted for Esau was reserved for Jacob. He didn't appear happy about this, but it seems that he realized that there is no undoing what God has done.

The Theological Questions

Essentially there are two views concerning the outcome of this story. There are those who believe that God used Jacob's and Rebekah's deceptiveness to fulfill His promise. This does not mean that God condoned their sin. It simply means that within the realm of His sovereignty and foreknowledge He knew how this scenario would play out. We see an example of this in Judges 14:4 when Samson goes against God's decree and seeks to take a wife from the Philistines. God used the situation to strike the Philistines and yet Samson's actions were not condoned by God.

The second view is that God had given Rebekah a promise. His word declared that the older, Esau, would serve the younger, Jacob. Because God cannot lie, it was therefore unnecessary for Rebekah or Jacob to scheme or deceive. Instead, their duty was to wait upon the Lord for Him to fulfill His word.

But they didn't wait upon the Lord. So the question remains, did God give the promise knowing that Jacob would live up to his name and would by cunning take the birthright and the blessing? There have been good arguments made by both sides. However, as far as us learning from this story, one aspect becomes clear.

Our Responsibility

We could go in circles trying to understand how God's sovereignty, foreknowledge and providence all played a part in the outcome of this story. I think that misses the point. We aren't called to figure it out. Instead we are to walk blamelessly and believe His word. We should never read this story and come away with the belief that we have to use whatever means necessary to bring about the Lord's purposes. Clearly we are often tempted to do so. Just as Abraham took Hagar hoping to fulfill God's promise, we try to intervene in areas that belong to God alone. When we put our hands to things we ought not, we create serious consequences for ourselves. For Rebekah and Jacob, these consequences were very painful. What if she didn't intervene? What if Esau returned with game for Isaac and he blessed him? There will always be "what ifs". Instead of trying to answer all of these questions and then act accordingly, we would be better suited to simply trust in the infallible word of God.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3: 5,6

With the Word Bible Commentary

Genesis 27

A wrong decision. It was only a matter of time before the divided home would start to self-destruct, and it all began with Isaac. He knew that God had chosen Jacob, the younger son, to receive the blessing (Gen. 25:23–26); but he announced that he would give it to Esau. It seems that Isaac was more interested in his physical appetite than in spiritual things. He was not the spiritual person he once had been.

A wrong solution. Rebekah knew what God's promise was to Jacob, and she should have let God work it out in His own way. "Faith is living without scheming," and who can hinder the Lord from accomplishing His purposes (Dan. 4:35)? Instead, she made her son a liar and deceived her husband. If Isaac had trusted the Lord instead of his physical senses (vv. 21, 22, 25, 27), he would not have been fooled.

A wrong attitude. Esau had made it clear years before that he was not interested in spiritual things (Gen. 25:29–34), and certainly he knew God's word about the blessing. He wept (Heb. 12:17) and begged for a blessing, and then he plotted to kill his brother! His heart was not right with God or man. We are reminded of Cain (Gen. 4).

Rebekah's "a few days" (v. 44) became over twenty years! Despite all her scheming, she never saw her son on earth again.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 27:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

With the Word Bible Commentary

Genesis 28

A day of disappointment (1–9). Jacob was a lonely fugitive, forced to flee from home. Even though he left with his father's blessing (and Isaac knew what he was doing), Jacob faced an unknown future, and his brother still wanted to kill him. Not an encouraging beginning for a new chapter in his life! But God was still in control (Rom. 8:28).

A night of discovery (10–15). Jacob was literally between a rock and a hard place. But that night, Jacob made several discoveries that helped to change his life. He discovered that God was with him and working for him and had a perfect plan for his life. Jacob may have been separated from home, but he was not separated from heaven. (See John 1:51.) The very angels of God were caring for him (Heb. 1:13–14). "When the night is the darkest, you see the stars the brightest."

A morning of dedication (16–22). Jacob began his day worshiping God and turning his hard pillow into a holy altar. He gave the place a new name: "house of God." Wherever God meets us, that place becomes a holy sanctuary. Jacob's faith as yet was weak, but he did lay hold of God's promises, even if there is a bit of "the bargainer" in his vow to give God the tithe. Jacob was making a new beginning, and twenty years later he would return to Bethel a more mature believer.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 28:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

