

GENESIS

27:1-46

Genesis 27:1-46

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 25th February 2024 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Galatians 6:7-10

Introduction

Life is filled with many choices. And we are free to make those choices. To do, or not to do. To choose one thing above another. To act in a certain way, or even think in a certain way. But we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that freedom to choose means freedom from consequences of those choices. For there are always consequences. Some of them very good. If you work hard at school, you'll benefit from that in later life. If you obey your parents you'll be on track to have a much better relationship with them. If you love your children, if you take care of them, you'll not only see them flourish, but also your relationship *with* them flourish. If you nurture your marriage, you'll find great blessing in the result of that choice.

However, just as there are good consequences to good choices, so there are dire consequences to poor choices. Of course, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that getting drunk, or having an affair, or committing a crime, all have their repercussions. And we only need to look back to the Garden of Eden to see how Adam & Eve's choice to disobey God had awful consequences.

Now, as Christians of course, we know that our sins have been forgiven because of Jesus' death in our place — the eternal consequence of our sin has been dealt with once and for all. However, we still have to live with the *earthly* consequences of our choices, for, just as we've just read this morning; "*whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*"

And this morning, as we study Genesis chapter 27, we are going to see a lot of reaping. Back in chapter 25 we first *read*:

Genesis 25:21-23

Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

So, even before Esau and Jacob were born, God told Rebekah that the older would serve the younger. Indeed, God both knew the boys character (even in the womb), and He foreknew all that would happen throughout their lives. And we can only assume that she told Isaac of what God had revealed to her in this moment. But how would that come to pass, when the culture was that the firstborn would receive the birthright?

Well, we *read* just a few verses later, after the birth of these twins:

Genesis chapter 25:28

And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

That is, both parents showed favouritism to one of the boys each. And as this chapter unfolds, we'll see the impact that would ultimately have on this family. Also of course, chapter 25 concludes by recording how Esau treated his birthright with contempt, selling it to his brother for a bowl of stew. And it will be in the second half of this chapter this morning that we'll see the bitter consequence to Esau's choice.

Now, of course there is a fourth member of this family — and that is Jacob. And we might think that despite his deception he gets off scot-free. Yet, as we pay close attention to this chapter we'll see that isn't the case. And as we get into the following chapters we'll even see he gets a taste of his own medicine, so to speak.

So as we study this chapter (and the ones following), let us be very diligent to think about our own lives, our own choices, and what is likely to come of them. For there *will* be consequences — that's *guaranteed*. But whether those consequences are good or bad will mostly depend on whether our choices are wise or foolish.

Overview of chapter twenty seven

Now, before we jump into verse 1, let's break down this chapter into its' logical parts:

Overview of chapter twenty seven

- v1-4 — Isaac creates a problem
- v5-17 — Rebekah forms a plan
- v18-29 — Jacob deceives his father
- v30-40 — Esau regrets his choices

- v41-46 — Esau's rage, Jacob's escape

In the first 4 verses we'll see that Isaac sets the stage on which the rest of the chapter will play out, showing his favouritism. Then, in verses 5-17, we'll see his wife, Rebekah, show her favouritism by forming a plan to favour Jacob. In verses 18-29 Jacob follows through on his part in that plan, deceiving Isaac, soon after which (as recorded in v30-40) Esau walks on stage to find he is too late, and that nothing can be done to obtain that which he once valued less than a bowl of stew — and he weeps. Finally, in the last 5 verses we see his weeping turn to anger and hatred, and Jacob has no choice but to escape (which will finally happen at the start of the next chapter). Sadly, this is about to become an unhappy family.

Chapter twenty seven

Let's dig a little deeper then. We read in the opening 2 verses:

Genesis 27:1-2

Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, "Here I am." Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death.

So, Isaac is old — in fact, he's around 138 years old at this point, and perhaps, given that his older half-brother Ishmael had died at 137 years old, he is starting to consider his own mortality.

And of course, like Isaac, like almost all those who have lived before us, we do not know the day of our death either (there are very few exceptions to that). In this case, though, Isaac can no longer see, and he assumes that his death will be soon. However, that will prove to be a wrong assumption, as he will live another 42 years after this point. But *assuming* the end is near he wants to give his blessing to his firstborn and favourite son, Esau, and so says to him:

Genesis 27:3-4

Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

Like his son, he seems rather led by his belly and so sends Esau off to grab dinner. On one hand, Isaac's intentions are good — there is example here that we should never stop wanting to pray for and bless our children (whether they are 7 months, 7 years or 77 years old, such as Esau is here).

But Isaac surely knew what God had revealed to Rebekah, that the older would serve the younger, and so in giving this *specific* blessing he is trying to get around what God had said, by doing what *he* wanted to do. That sounds uncomfortably familiar to us, doesn't it! But next we read:

Genesis 27:5

Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it.

Now, Rebekah, on hearing this, may have thought about what God had said, and how this action of Isaac's was going against it. *If* that were her motivation for what she did next, then she at best was doing the right thing the wrong way. But I don't believe that *was* what motivated her, for she too had a favourite, as we previously read in chapter 25. And that favourite was Jacob.

Genesis 27:6-7

So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 'Bring me game and make savoury food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

She underlines how important this blessing was, that it was to be in the sight of God. And makes clear Isaac's appetite for both food and to bless Esau, despite what God had said and despite Esau's actions in selling his birthright to Jacob. And now she reveals her plan, telling Jacob what he needs to do:

Genesis 27:8

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you.

We'll see what she asked him to do in the following verses, but let us pause for a moment and ask whether Jacob *should* obey her voice in this matter, and indeed, whether we should *always* obey our parents. Simply put, we are to obey our parents at all times, but noting what Paul wrote to the Ephesians, quoting Exodus chapter 20:

Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

Note that Paul says "obey your parents *in the Lord*" — meaning the one and only exception to obeying your parents in *all* things, is where any instruction they give is *contrary* to God's Word or His will. That is, if your parents ask you to tidy your room, you should do it. But if they ask you to steal from a shop, you should not. If your parents ask you to live in this country, when God is calling you to serve Him in another, you should obey God over them.

So what does Rebekah ask Jacob to do? She says:

Genesis 27:9-10

Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savoury food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."

Rebekah knew what God had said almost 80 years ago, that the older would serve the younger, meaning Esau would serve Jacob, that Jacob (and not Esau) would be the one that should be blessed. She understood that well. But now, she decides that she must go about helping God here, because clearly time is running out, and so she forms a plan. However, Jacob can see a flaw in it:

Genesis 27:11-12

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing."

At first, this seems commendable, for it seems that he doesn't want to make matters worse. But actually what we see here is that Jacob isn't put off the idea because it would be wrong to deceive, he is only put off it because he might get caught. In other words, he is worried about his reputation, not his character. And that's the wrong way around. What he should have been concerned with, and what we likewise should be concerned with, is our character — how we act in private, and what God sees us do. For if we live to please Him, and do the right thing even when no-one is watching, then we won't need to worry about our reputation — that will take care of itself. But if all we are worried about is reputation, we will leave ourselves vulnerable to sin in those moments that we can lack integrity in the hope that we won't get caught.

Now here in Genesis, Rebekah seeks to reassure him that all will be OK:

Genesis 27:13-14

But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved.

Trust me, Rebekah says. And Jacob obeys.

Genesis 27:15-17

Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

She has set Jacob up to deceive her husband, and he is willing to give it a go, and proceeds:

Genesis 27:18-20

So he went 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 just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God brought it to me."

So, Isaac questions who he is talking to, and Jacob has to think on his feet. But in his response he is not only lying, but he is now claiming that God had his hand on him. And therein is a warning that we must be cautious of making the mistake of believing everyone that says they have heard from God, are led by Him, or even have a message from Him, are actually telling the truth. For sometimes, they are telling a bare-faced lie, as Jacob is here. And to Isaac's credit, he doesn't fall for this lie — at least, not yet, for we read:

Genesis 27:21-23

Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." And he did not recognise him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.

Oh, how we might feel for Isaac here. But let's watch for the parallel to our own lives. For he's not seeing clearly, he thinks his life is all over, and now along comes along someone very much like who he had wanted to walk in at this moment. They smelt right, they felt right. But rather than trust the word that he heard, that made him doubt the legitimacy of this situation, he proceeds based on feeling. Indeed, this is the one time in scripture that someone depended and proceeded on feeling, and he's about to be deceived. Even though he had doubts, he still goes ahead. Verse 24:

Genesis 27:24-25

Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am." He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

Oh what warning there is for us here, in that whether we are offered a business deal, a job offer, or a romantic relationship, we must not push aside the doubts that the Word we've heard raises on the matter. For once our flesh starts being fulfilled by what's offered to us, we'll become ensnared.

Here, Isaac had been expecting his eldest son to walk in. As he heard *Jacob's* voice he immediately doubted this was Esau, but then as his feelings and appetite were satisfied, he proceed without delay.

Genesis 27:26-29

Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

So then, Isaac goes ahead with this blessing, he assumes to his firstborn. But Jacob is now the one receiving this blessing. And, first, Isaac shows a tender side, he shows affection. Second, he shows affirmation — praising the qualities he sees. And third, he prays for his future — that God would provide for him, protect him, and bless him (an attitude and action we would do well to follow with our children).

Now, while Isaac had been deceived, what he prays God indeed answered — for as we look at the history of Israel and the world, we see how indeed many have found themselves blessed or in much trouble based on how they have treated that nation and people who were and are Jacob's descendants. And so, Jacob received the blessing from his father, as God had foretold would happen — though of course Jacob had received it through deceit, and he leaves Isaac's presence.

Genesis 27:30

Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

And this is really close. For as we'll read, Esau walks in with food prepared, so he must have already been home and cooking while Jacob was being blessed by Isaac. We read:

Genesis 27:31-32

He also had made savoury food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."

And the penny drops...

Genesis 27:33

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."

What absolute confidence Isaac has in God, that what he has asked God for in prayer, God *will* do! May we have boldness like that! But of course, we need to know we're praying according to God's will. Here, Isaac knew the promises that God had given to Abraham, and to him, and to his descendants. He didn't doubt those for a moment it seems. And so the shock to Isaac is that he has fallen for this deception, and he knows that there is no going back.

Genesis 27:34

When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me—me also, O my father!"

Esau knows the ship has sailed. And desperately he pleads with his father.

Genesis 27:35

But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing."

And he was not wrong, for this blessing had been obtained through deceit. And so we read:

Genesis 27:36

And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

Esau, then, points to Jacob's name meaning *heel-catcher* or *supplanter* — saying *he's always been trying to trip me up!* And clearly he is furious with Jacob, and he brings up the prior occasion where he sold his birthright to him. But he seems unwilling to accept that he was foolish in doing so, and instead blames his sin on his brother. And here, we now have a trembling Isaac, because he showed favouritism, then followed his feelings. And a weeping Esau, because he had prioritised the instant over the ultimate. And oh how they are reaping what they had sown.

What a sharp warning this should be to us. For if we are obedient to the Lord, if we follow His Word rather than our own will, then even if sorrows like sea billows roll, we will be able to say *"it is well with my soul"*. But if we stray, if we fail to be obedient, then the consequences of our actions might well be overwhelmingly crushing. And you can picture the desperation in this conversation as it continues:

Genesis 27:37

Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?"

In other words, "there's nothing I can do, and nothing left I can offer you".

Genesis 27:38

And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

And isn't this just like us? We disobey the Lord, we go our own way, wildly undervaluing what God has offered us, and then when we realise what we're missing out on, we still ask God to bless us — to bless our mess, just as Esau's grandad, Abraham, had done many years before. But like it was with Abraham, the answer is still no. God cannot bless our disobedience. Rather, we must come to our senses, and approach God in repentance and faith. Sadly though, Esau did not do that, even being held up as an example to avoid in the book of Hebrews where we read:

Hebrews 12:14-17

Pursue peace with all people, 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.

What is this saying? Well, first, don't undervalue all that God has promised you if you obey Him, if you walk with Him. But second, should you be foolish enough to treat His blessings with contempt, and instead fulfil the lusts of your flesh, don't continue to be foolish as Esau was, for he was distraught at the consequences of his sin, yet never repented of his sin.

What a sad sequence of events this is. We read on:

Genesis 27:39-40

Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck."

In other words, God will still provide, he will still be blessed in that regard, but he will be a shadow of what he could have been, receiving a fraction of what he could have received, and he will indeed serve his brother as God had foretold would be the case before they were even born — and indeed there would be fraught interactions with the nation of Edom, Esau's descendants, in the centuries that followed.

Genesis 27:41

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Esau, unwilling to admit any error on his part, let's bitterness grow into hatred, and concluding the same as Isaac — that his father didn't have long to live — decides he will take matters into his own hand that he might take back all that his father had given to Jacob, by murdering him. And we can be sure that the devil was using this as another opportunity to destroy the line through to Christ, using jealousy and the desire for revenge as the levers to get Esau to be so wicked, waiting for the moment Isaac himself would die.

Though of course, Isaac would live for another four decades, but no-one in the family knew that. And so we see Rebekah protects her favourite son. We read:

Genesis 27:42

And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you.

Who told Rebekah? For notice in verse 41 that Esau had said this in his heart. Therefore I see no reason to not believe that the Lord Himself (who knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts) personally intervened here, that the line through to Christ would continue. And in response to this news, Rebekah forms a new plan for Jacob:

Genesis 27:43-45

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, 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 bereaved also of you both in one day?"

So she wants Jacob to be safe — that's understandable. And we read that she doesn't want to be bereaved of both her sons in one day, meaning one of two possible things — either that if Esau did murder Jacob, then the death penalty would be applied to him, as per Genesis 9:6, or quite possibly she realised she had *already* lost Esau in one sense, having shown such favouritism to Jacob, and didn't want to lose Jacob through murder.

So, sending him away seems like the best option, and since the only other land she had ever known was her home back in Mesopotamia, far east of Canaan, she tells him to go there, and stay with her brother for a few days, crucially, until Esau has calmed down. But in an effort to not lose her son, she does exactly that — for days turned into weeks, into months, into years — for Jacob would not return to the land for over 20 years, and she would never see him again, dying before he returned.

Her personal favouritism had caught up with her, and she now reaped all that she sowed as she never saw her favourite son again, and her elder son no doubt thought very poorly of her to say the least. And that's to say nothing of the strain it must have put on her marriage relationship with Isaac, whom had been deceived at her suggestion, and with her help, and who also as a result would not see Jacob for over 20 years himself.

But at this moment, of course, she has only given this *instruction* to Jacob, and he has not left home yet. And like any caring mother seeing her son about to leave the nest, she gives thought to what will become of him while he is away. And so we read:

Genesis 27:46

And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

In the prior chapter we read how Esau's wives were a grief of mind to both Isaac and Rebekah. And last week I noted that this wasn't because they were racist, but because these girls were from the land around them, where false gods were worshipped. In other words, this was a spiritual concern. And with the line through to Christ now to go through Jacob who had received the birthright, who had received the blessing, it was now absolutely imperative that he didn't marry a girl who worshipped idols, rather than the one true God. It was critical that he didn't marry a descendant of these giant tribes, whose very purpose was to destroy the line through to the Messiah.

And so, in this verse, Rebekah makes clear to Isaac how important this is to her. And we'll see in verse 1 of the next chapter that he responds immediately to this, charging Jacob to not marry a girl from the land of Canaan, in a similar way to how Abraham had charged *his* servant to not find a wife for Isaac from this land. But more than tell Jacob this for the future, Isaac will then send him away immediately to go find a wife — whether aware of Esau's intent or not we don't know.

Conclusion

So then, as we finish this chapter we find this family unit in tatters. Why? Because of wrong priorities, favouritism, bitterness, deceit, anger, hatred and more. And we must be careful, lest our own families, or indeed our church family, ever descend down the same path.

Application questions

In closing, here are 3 questions to ponder today and throughout the week ahead:

- Do you show partiality or favouritism?
- Are you stubbornly pursuing what you want, rather than what God wants?
- Are your actions and words leading to unity in your family?

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