

Midweek Meditation November 18, 2020, week of November 15, 2020

Genesis 27

Last week we talked about the 27th Chapter of Genesis, but in the end, we did not get through the whole chapter. We got through the section where Jacob and Rebekah tricked Esau out of Isaac's birthright. And today, we are going to talk about how Esau reacts to being tricked out of his birthright. He held a grudge. He says that the days of mourning his father are not far off, and when the day of Isaac's death comes, I will kill my brother. Esau, out of bitterness and anger, for having been tricked out of what he viewed to be his inheritance is willing to kill his twin brother. And of course, we know from last week, that the inheritance that Esau is so earnestly desiring was not Isaac's to give. It was not Rebekah's to give. It was God's to give. And no matter how the blessing was passed on, we can see that in the end, God's will comes to pass.

And now, Rebekah hears that it is Esau's plan to kill her favorite son Jacob, and to kill the one that God has chosen to lead His people, Israel. Rebekah, as it turns out, is preparing to further her plan to protect her son Jacob, and to further Jacob's purpose in God's master plan. After hearing that Esau is planning to kill Jacob, she calls Jacob to her, and tells him that Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing Jacob. So, she says to Jacob, "Now then my son, do what I say; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I will send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

There are a couple of interesting things here that I want to point out. It is interesting that Rebekah said in the last chapter, let the curse fall on me. And now, she says that Jacob should stay in Haran until Esau is no longer angry with Jacob for what Jacob did to Esau. In the last chapter, she tells Jacob that she would take the blame for this deception. In this chapter, Rebekah seems to be placing the blame for this deception squarely on the shoulders of Jacob. I don't know that this has any Biblical significance, but it is interesting.

Another interesting thing is when Rebekah says, "Why should I lose both of you in one day?" What is she talking about? Is she talking about losing Esau and Jacob because Jacob would be killed, and Esau be disowned for his actions? Or is Rebekah talking about losing Jacob and Isaac, Jacob being killed by Esau and Isaac dying because he is at the end of his years. We don't really know. But it is an interesting thing to think about.

The next section shows the continuation of Rebekah opening the door so that her plan to send Jacob to a land where he will be far away from the wrath of his brother's anger. Rebekah's manipulative actions also make sure that Jacob is encouraged to marry a member of her family, a member of the line of Abraham, rather than marrying one of those Canaanite women who seem to annoy Isaac and Rebekah so profoundly. She goes to Isaac, her husband, and says adamantly, "I am disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the woman of this land, from the Hittite women, my life will not be worth living."

Now it is true, and we know it is true, that both Isaac and Rebekah do not like Esau's Hittite wives, but we should be a little suspicious about the sincerity of what Rebekah is saying to Isaac here. Sure, she does not like the Hittite women, but she also wants to open the door so that Isaac will allow Jacob to go

to her homeland. Sure, to find himself a wife that is not a Hittite, but more importantly to Rebekah, to protect her beloved Jacob from the wrath of Esau who is bitter about Jacob receiving God's blessing.

This way, Isaac blesses Jacob and commands him not to marry a Canaanite woman and to journey to Paddan Aram to the house of Bethuel, Rebekah's father. Isaac commands Jacob to take a wife from amongst the daughters of Laban, Rebekah's brother. And then, Isaac says to Jacob, "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers. May God give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien in the land that God gave to Abraham." Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way. Rebekah got exactly what she wanted. Not because of her cleverness, but because what she wanted for her son was God's will for the nations Israel.

Just like in the last chapter, we have to ask, was Rebekah a noble warrior for God's will; the will that she was told about at the time of Jacob's birth, or is it just a coincidence that God's providence happens to be on her side of the conversation?

And what about Isaac? In the last chapter, he was caught trying to substitute his own will for God's. In this passage, was he simply being manipulated by Rebekah, to command Isaac to go to a distant land, away from the wrath of Esau? Or has he seen the error of his ways, and realized that Jacob was the chosen one and Esau has none of the spiritual depth that he would have needed to be the recipient of God's blessed inheritance? Is Isaac's motive to honor God by sending Jacob off to find his God appointed wife and to find refuge from the harm of Esau's wrath? Or is he simply trying to avoid the prospect of having another Hittite daughter-in-law that would be an enormous annoyance to Isaac and his wife Rebekah. No matter what the answer to these questions is, what is played out in this passage is God's providence. And often God's providence plays out in our lives in much the same way. Our motives are not always completely pure. Our actions are not always completely noble, but in the end, we often see God's goodness come from the frailty of our attempts at faith and service to God.

There is one more piece to this puzzle. After Esau realizes that he has lost the battle. He had clearly been skillfully out maneuvered by Rebekah and Jacob. So as a response, he does something to try to gain the graces of his father. He realizes that the wives that he has chosen are not pleasing to his father or his mother, so he goes to Ishmael who is the disowned son of Abraham, and takes another wife from the line of Ishmael. And he thinks that will earn him the good graces of his parents. Now the scripture does not say whether Esau's choice of another wife is pleasing to Isaac and Rebekah or not. But My guess is that choosing a wife from a line of the family that has been disowned by the providence of God is not going to earn him much more favor than the choice of his first two wives from the people of the Hittites. That is just my guess about the matter.

So the lesson for us to learn in this passage is that God's plan has a way of playing out in spite of our best attempts of substituting our own wisdom for God's providence. And that was true in Abraham's time, in Isaac's time and in our time. In this case, Isaac is the one who in the end, accepted God's plan even though it was different than the plan that he tried to implement in place of God's will. If we can do like Isaac did, and by faith, accept God's will, even when it is different than the wisdom we try to offer up, then we are on our way to walking in the light of the Lord.

Let us pray...