



Jacob and Esau: Birthright and Blessing

Gen 25:19-34, 27:1-35

[based on the sermon preached on 6.11.22 – available on the [church app](#) or at <https://lwac.org.au/sermons>]

KEY IDEAS

1. Isaac's family (Isaac, Rebecca, Esau and Jacob) have many challenges and dysfunctions: Isaac ignored God's directive that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob) and favoured Esau; Rebecca did not communicate with, was not in sync with and deceived her husband about their sons; Esau was proud and thought himself self-sufficient, not believing in the promise God gave to his grandfather Abraham that his family would be the conduit of blessing to all mankind; Jacob was also proud and was deceitful in obtaining that which he desired.
2. Even so, God was gracious to Isaac and his family, working with them and through them, even their decisions and actions which were not God-honoring.
3. Despite the failures of Isaac's family, God used them to accomplish his will and purpose, his grace still worked through them.
4. If God's grace was still present to Isaac and his family, and if God can work his will out through them in spite of their struggles, God can do the same to and for us.

CONNECT

- What were some of the dynamics operating in your family of origin? Were they always healthy, or were some unhealthy? If you are able, on a scale of 1-10 rate your family of origin for dysfunction, one being perfectly functional, not dysfunctional at all, 10 being highly dysfunctional. Share about this as you feel comfortable.

STUDY

Read Genesis 25:19-28

- Esau and Jacob were both named from real experiences at their birth: Esau probably means "hairy" (he was born with lots of hair) and Jacob means "he grasps the heel" which can also mean "he deceives" (he was grasping Esau's heel as he was being born). Do you think this

way of naming branded or scripted the children for later life? Esau became like a wild man (wild beasts have hair) and Jacob was rather deceptive.

- Were you branded or scripted as a child with any label or description which has followed you into adulthood? If so, has this brand been a help or a hindrance? Share about this as you are able.
- In response to Rebecca's prayer, God reveals that the younger (Jacob) would be master over the older (Esau). This was not consistent with the traditional family power and relational structures where the oldest child not only received a larger inheritance but was also recognized as the leader of the family and family line, much like Prince William in England is in line to inherit the throne before and over his younger brother, Harry, and lead the House of Windsor in England today.
- What does this statement reflect about God and his way of doing things? Is God bound by human convention, custom or practice? Can God do whatever God wants? If so, does God do whatever he wants arbitrarily, or with a purpose? If for a purpose, what might that purpose be here?

Read Genesis 25:29-34

- Since the birthright in question included an inheritance of the land in accordance with the Abrahamic blessing, what does Jacob's desiring it (so much so that it is the first thing he thinks about taking from Esau when the opportunity presents itself) and Esau's despising or not caring about it reveal about their respective beliefs in this inheritance and blessing?
- Do you think Esau regretted his decision to sell his birthright to Jacob? Why or why not?
- Have you ever undervalued something which you only later realized was more important than you thought?
- Have you ever made a hasty decision you later regretted? How did you react to this decision? Did you accept your mistake and move on, or were you bitter and angry with yourself, others or even God?

Read Genesis 27:1-17

- Why do you suppose Isaac favoured Esau when the word of the Lord to Rebecca had clearly been that Jacob was the one who would carry on God's covenantal blessing? Why did Isaac want to bless Esau when that was not what God wanted? Do you think this was ignorance or defiance?

- Can you think of a time when you defiantly wanted, and perhaps pursued, something which went against God's way? What was the result of this?
- Rebecca instructed Jacob to lie and deceive his father in pursuit of his blessing. In other words, she instructed him to do wrong in order to get a good result. Normally we say that good ends do not justify immoral means. Was what Rebecca (and Jacob) did immoral or was it justified?
- Have you ever made choices which were not God-honoring but were for a good end (or so you thought)? Have you ever experienced God working through and using your bad or poor choices and decisions to accomplish his will? If so, was God's will accomplished in spite of your poor choices or perhaps even because of them?

Read Genesis 27:18-29

- Do you think it was easy or difficult for Jacob to lie to his father? Do you find lying easy or difficult? Are you a good liar or a poor one?
- Why do you think Isaac so quickly and easily ignored the warning signs that something was not right? Jacob came in too quickly, not allowing sufficient time for Esau to capture wild game, bring it home and prepare it. Isaac was also expecting Esau's voice (which he surely knew well), but he unexpectedly heard Jacob's instead. Both of these raised red caution flags in Isaac's mind yet he ignored the warnings and plowed ahead, being convinced by the aroma of his son and the taste of the food.
- Similarly, have you ever ignored warning signs and gone down the wrong proverbial road because you wanted to believe something was true? This is especially relevant regarding people in our lives, people close to us. We earnestly want to believe the best about them so we often ignore the red flag warning signs that something is not right in their behaviour and/or attitude. This is especially true of parents with teenagers. Can you relate?

Read Genesis 27:30-35

- Isaac was so convinced he had blessed Esau that he failed to recognize the voice of Esau when he entered Isaac's presence with the meal of wild game he had caught and prepared. Have you ever been so convinced something was right that you were not able to recognize the truth even though it was right there in front of you?
- V. 33 tells us Isaac "trembled violently" after he recognized the truth of his mistake and Jacob's deception. Yet, he didn't negate or discount the blessing he had given; the blessing still stood, even though given to someone other than to whom he thought he was giving it.

- What does this indicate about the power of words and the power of a blessing over someone's life, especially that of a child from a parent, regardless of age? Even if we don't see our words infused with supernatural prophetic power, do we lose or miss something when we don't stop to bless others, especially our children?

APPLY

- Given the main theme in these chapters of God's working in and through us despite our brokenness and dysfunction, what is one area of your life where you have seen God working despite or perhaps even through your brokenness?
- Similarly, what is one area of your life where you do see God's grace present and at work in your life despite your brokenness and dysfunction?
- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?
- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.
 - 1.
 - 2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.