

Genesis 27A (2011)

- Chapter 26 taught us about Isaac
 - He was a man of faults, but he was also a man in covenant with the living God
 - And because of that covenant, God continues to bless Isaac to ensure God's plan is accomplished through this man
 - And Isaac is a man who heard God's voice, obeyed and waited patiently for those blessings
 - Meanwhile, Isaac and Rebecca are raising two sons, Esau and Jacob
 - These boys each have their own issues, and as we've seen already, the boys' issues reflect the parenting mistakes of Isaac and Rebecca
 - Isaac has long favored Esau simply for Esau's ability to bring Isaac the kind of food he likes
 - And Isaac gives every indication he intends to transfer the birthright to his eldest son
 - Rebecca prefers Jacob, probably in response to her husband's misplaced favoritism
 - And perhaps she is following the Lord's revelation that the younger son will be more honored than the older
 - It might be tempting for us to conclude that both sides were equally wrong, and neither side can claim the high ground
 - Isaac and Rebecca are both acting selfishly and deceptively
 - And before it's all over, there will be plenty of guilt to go around
 - Nevertheless, the Bible isn't silent on the issue, and as we'll see today, there is one side that deserves the blame

[Gen. 26:34](#) When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite;
[Gen. 26:35](#) and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

- The end of Chapter 26 introduces us to Esau's wives
 - The fact of Esau's marriages isn't remarkable, except for two details
 - First, Esau takes multiple wives without cause
 - Multiple marriages have always been outside God's desire, and the entire testimony of Scripture makes that clear
 - The practice of taking multiple wives has either been associated with ungodly, carnal men like Lamech
 - Or it has been shown as a consequence of sin among God's people, as with Abraham
 - Throughout the history in the Bible, we see this pattern repeated, and in every case where multiple wives exist, trouble follows
 - Esau's father has not taken multiple wives, and even his grandfather Abraham's decision to take multiple wives was a sinful act born out of frustration
 - Abraham and Sarah were trying to solve the problem of childlessness
 - Obviously, taking multiple wives was not the right thing for Abraham to do, and it created new difficulties without solving the original problem
 - Now for the first time, we see the son of a patriarch willfully and without cause take multiple wives
 - This is the pattern of the unbelieving world in the day, and it reinforces what we know about Esau already
 - He is a godless man, as Hebrews says
 - He is living in his flesh
- Furthermore, we learn that Esau has chosen Canaanite women for his wives
 - This is further proof of Esau's rebellion against God and against the ways of the patriarchs
 - We remember that Abraham told his servant that Isaac was not to wed a woman from among the people in the land

- God had revealed to Abraham that he was not to intermarry with Canaanites, because they would corrupt Abraham's family
- Abraham must have known about the curse God spoke against these people to Noah in Genesis 9:25
- Yet here is Esau the oldest son of Isaac purposely going against the patriarchs and against God by choosing to marry not one, but two Canaanite women
- The women are called Judith, which means praise, and Basemath, which means perfume
 - Their names suggest the appearance of beautiful women, perhaps even gracious and kind women
- But where there is sin, we will find consequences too
 - Verse 35 tells us that these women brought grief to Isaac and Rebecca
 - The word for grief in Hebrew is actually a compound word made up of two words
 - In Hebrew it is the words bitterness and spirit
 - These women brought a spirit of bitterness to Isaac and Rebecca
 - We're given no more information than this...no details, no explanation
 - Did the women themselves bring bitterness to the parents?
 - Perhaps, but their names suggest otherwise
 - More likely, it was Esau's actions, his decision to marry multiple wives and to take wives from the Canaanite people that brought the bitterness
 - For by these actions, Esau was showing himself to be a rebel willing to disobey God's will
 - As a result, Esau's parents experienced the bitterness of watching their eldest son reject and repudiate the call and commandments of God
- So many Christian families have experienced this same kind of disappointment

- Even in the best of Christian homes, the sin of the flesh is strong and the enemy is active
 - Leading some children to rebel, to make sinful choices, to ignore godly counsel and disregard commandments of God
 - And when they do, we will suffer along with them
- In the worst cases, our children may reveal themselves to be like Esau
 - An ungodly person whose life is marked by rebellion and sin reflecting an unbelieving heart
- When a child rebels in this way against the family and against God, it brings a unique kind of pain to a Christian parent
 - Though the manner and timing of each person's rebellion will be different from another's, the effect on the parent is always the same
 - Grief, bitterness, disappointment, anger, sorrow
 - And there are no easy answers
- The Bible doesn't give parents a guarantee that the Lord will bring faith to every member of our household
 - Obviously, even Isaac didn't raise two godly children
 - Nevertheless, the Bible does command us to raise our children in the ways of the Lord, as part of a promise that He will guard their hearts along the way

Prov. 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

- And remember God's charge to Abraham:

Gen. 18:19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

- Training your children in the righteousness of the Lord is not a guarantee of a believing household, but it does offer the hope that God may bless our obedience through the lives of our children

- But raising children in the righteousness of the Lord is a far more demanding requirement than I suspect most Christians realize
 - It is more than dragging our kids to church on Sunday, reading bedtime Bible stories, or praying before meals
- It's about how we make our family decisions, how we answer life's toughest questions, how we discipline and how we respond to sin
 - Is God's word the lamp to our feet?
 - Is His love and grace evident in our treatment of others?
 - When our children seek our counsel, do we take them to the answer from Scripture
 - Especially when they bring us tough questions on dating, sex, money, integrity, career, peer pressure, culture and politics?
 - Do they learn Biblical principles by watching how we live our lives, by the choices we make and attitudes we carry?
 - Do they see the Lord's influence in our thinking and actions even as we instruct our children to seek after the Lord?
- When the Bible commands parents to raise their children in the fear and admonishment of the Lord, this is what it is talking about
 - We are to impress upon our children the importance of following God through our words and our actions
 - And this process is built upon teaching our children God's word
- Obviously, this process is not easy, and it needs two parents, working in harmony
 - In my experience, when one parent is carrying the lion's share of this responsibility (especially when that one parent is the mother rather than the father), success is far from certain
 - The father needs to lead
 - But if the parents are working against each other in an effort to raise godly children, no house can stand divided against itself
- So what happened in Isaac's home?

- Esau is a godless man who has sold his birthright to his brother
 - He has gone against God and his fathers by taking multiple wives from among the Canaanite women
 - He is a source of bitterness to his parents
 - Clearly he is not a man of God and not a proper heir to the promises of God
 - And God said it would be this way even before he was born
- Meanwhile, they also have a godly son, Jacob, whom God has chosen to receive His promises
 - That son lives in their home, respects their authority and seeks to please them
- How should Isaac and Rebecca respond to this situation?
 - Isaac and Rebecca must acknowledge the reality of what God has done, and not done
 - They must recognize that Esau is a man determined to live without God and opposed to God's word
 - They still love him, and they will still welcome him in the family
 - But Isaac must shield his godly son from the influences of his godless brother
 - In fact, Isaac would have been right to send Esau and his godless wives away, just as Abraham did
- Meanwhile, Isaac should cultivate Jacob's faith and trust in the Lord
 - He should help Jacob grow in his walk with the Lord, acknowledging the Lord's call upon Jacob's life
 - They are obligated to honor God and His choices
- Had Isaac been thinking with his head and with his heart rather than with his stomach, he would have taken these steps
 - Instead, Isaac makes a bad situation even worse

- He plays favorites for the ungodly son while giving little regard for the son whom God has chosen
- Not only is he trying to put lipstick on the pig that is Esau, he's undermining the relationship he has with the one son who does share his love for the Lord

Gen. 27:1 Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am."

Gen. 27:2 Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death.

Gen. 27:3 "Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me;

Gen. 27:4 and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

- Isaac is reaching the end of his life, or so he believes
 - The text says he is losing his eyesight, which is probably what caused Isaac to suspect that he was nearing death
 - As a result, Isaac decides he needs to convey his blessing upon his eldest son at this time
 - Both Jacob and Esau are 77 years old by now
 - Isaac's older half brother Ishmael had died 14 years earlier, and since the two brothers were only separated by about 14 years, Isaac may have assumed he was running out of time
 - The phrase Isaac uses in v.2 is very important, because in ancient east legal practices, the language of this phrase had special meaning
 - It was a statement that meant Isaac was about to write his will
 - Since written documents were rare in this day, oral statements constituted binding documentation
 - And the language used in those oral agreements followed specific rules much like legal documents of today
 - So when Isaac uses the words "I am old and do not know the day of my death..." he is using legal language indicating he is about to award the inheritance
- So Isaac calls for Esau

- Notice he doesn't call for Jacob nor for Rebecca nor for any servants or witnesses
 - Isaac wants this moment to be a private moment for only himself and Esau, which would have been most unusual
 - As we'll see later in the life of Jacob, the patriarch always calls his entire family to be present when he gives his blessing
 - And Esau for his part is complicit with his father's conspiracy, hoping to regain the birthright that he sold to Jacob
 - Esau still cares nothing for the promises of God, but perhaps he's reconsidered losing the double portion
- What are we to conclude by looking at the way Isaac is behaving?
 - We can safely assume that Isaac knows about God's word concerning Jacob ruling over Esau
 - Furthermore, he would have known Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob
 - Yet here's Isaac still trying to give his blessing to Esau, despite God's word and the lawful sale of the birthright
 - Isaac is revealing himself to be a stubborn man determined to have his way
- Even the timing of this event is suspect
 - By a careful examination of the genealogies given in the stories of Isaac and Jacob, we can determine that Isaac was only 137 years old at this moment
 - Isaac will eventually live to the age of 180, meaning he lived another 43 years after this moment!
 - He wasn't near death
 - Isaac likely wanted to convey the blessing before Rebecca or Jacob suspected, thereby transferring it to Esau against their wishes
- If you want further evidence that Isaac was motivated by his flesh rather than by the Spirit of God, look at Isaac's request

- Isaac insists that Esau go out to the field, hunt some game and make a feast for Isaac
 - There's probably a couple reasons Isaac wanted Esau to do this
 - First, the obvious reason is Isaac truly loved Esau's ability to reward him with the taste of wild meat
 - Secondly, with Isaac's dim eyesight, he needed a way to be sure he was blessing the right son
 - The blessing was an all-important moment
 - Isaac didn't want to be wrong when he pronounced his blessing and transferred the birthright
 - So Isaac awaits Esau's return
- We need to take a good long hard look at Isaac here
 - As the patriarch and father of these boys, he's about to set into motion a series of circumstances that will rip his family apart
 - This is sin, pure and simple, and sin has consequences
 - Later as we will study Jacob's life, we need to remember something of how his father treated him
- At this point we might be wondering how God will keep His word to grant the birthright to Jacob, since apparently Isaac is prepared to give it to Esau
 - Remember, the birthright is God's to grant in this family, because His promises are being inherited too
 - God determines who receives His promises, not men
 - So how will God prevent Isaac from succeeding?
 - God is capable of getting his way, as we will see next week
 - Rebecca will learn of Isaac's plan and will intervene to prevent it from succeeding
- But what a sad state of affairs
 - Here is a father with two sons

- One who is godless, rebellious, and willing to cheat his brother out of the sale of the birthright
 - A son who rejected the family lifestyle and rejected God's commands to not take Canaanite wives, and yet is being rewarded for his choices by his father
- And a second son who is godly, living the life of a shepherd like his father
 - The man God has selected and who has a heart for God
- And the father is spending all his energy and time devising deceptive schemes so that he can award the birthright to the rebellious son rather than to the godly son
 - Why? Because the culture insisted that the oldest prevail
 - And because Isaac's stomach preferred the taste of wild meat
 - Both of these reasons come down to a single word: flesh
 - Isaac's flesh led him to these conclusions
- If as fathers and mothers we allow our flesh to rule their lives, then we stand a good chance of destroying the good work God may be doing in our family's life
 - Isaac began his life in great obedience to God, but he ended it as a man at odds with his wife and bereaved of his children
 - Let's be sure we are listening to God and not to our stomachs