

Genesis 27B (2011)

- Let's jump back into our story, as Isaac conspires to award his inheritance to his eldest son, Esau

[Gen. 27:5](#) Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home,

[Gen. 27:6](#) Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying,

[Gen. 27:7](#) 'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

[Gen. 27:8](#) "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you.

[Gen. 27:9](#) "Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves.

[Gen. 27:10](#) "Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

[Gen. 27:11](#) Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man.

[Gen. 27:12](#) "Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."

[Gen. 27:13](#) But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me."

[Gen. 27:14](#) So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved.

[Gen. 27:15](#) Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.

[Gen. 27:16](#) And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

[Gen. 27:17](#) She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

- As Isaac was planning to give his blessing to his eldest son, Rebekah was listening nearby
 - She hears Isaac's plan, and immediately she recognizes what her husband is doing
 - Isaac is working in secret to accomplish his own desires rather than honor the Lord's desires
 - He is going to award the blessing to Esau, which would transfer the patriarchal authority and the covenant promises of the Lord

- At this point we need to remember what we mean when speaking of the birthright
- The birthright gave the oldest son the right to a double portion of the inheritance, patriarchal authority and the chief blessing of the father
 - The blessing of the father was the means of conferring these other privileges
 - Even though all children would receive a blessing, the oldest received the greatest blessing from the father
- We know that the Lord has declared that the younger would receive this greater blessing
 - And then we saw Jacob purchase from Esau the right to receive this greater blessing
 - Esau cared nothing for the promises of God, of course
 - And he was shortsighted to think little of his father's wealth
 - It was through this purchase that the Lord brought about His will for Jacob to receive the birthright
- But there is still the matter of Isaac's role in transferring the birthright
 - Isaac wants his oldest son to receive the blessing, just as Abraham had wanted Ishmael to receive his blessing
- So Isaac is knowingly and intentionally working to thwart both God and men
 - He is working against the pronouncement of God because he doesn't agree with it
 - And he's working against the laws of the day by cheating Jacob out of the birthright he lawfully purchased
- Rebekah, having heard the plan, jumps into action to stop it
 - She is going to prepare her son to play the part of Esau to fool her husband
 - Rebekah knows that she has a window of opportunity

- It will take Esau some hours to find game, clean it and cook it
 - She must act faster, which she can do because she doesn't hunt to find her meat
 - She tells Jacob to take two goats and kill them so Rebekah can prepare them as a savory stew for Isaac
 - Now at this point Jacob raises the obvious concern
 - Dad may be fooled by the food, but he won't be fooled by the differences between Esau and me
 - Esau is a hairy man, and Jacob had smooth skin
 - Literally, Jacob is concerned that Isaac will reach out at a point and place his hand on Jacob's arm
 - When he does, the ruse will be exposed
 - Jacob says he would receive a curse rather than a blessing because he would be seen as a deceiver
 - The Hebrew word for deceive in v.12 is actually the word for mock
 - Jacob is saying he will be seen as mocking his father's blindness, and such disrespect could be fatal for Jacob
- In response, Rebekah says that whatever curse comes upon Jacob for his part in this deception, she will bear it
 - What she's saying is that whatever guilt and consequences would fall on Jacob she will bear instead
 - Can she make such a bargain?
 - No, she can't, because she will bear her own guilt in this deception
 - A guilty person can't remove the sin of another person
 - In theory, if she had no guilt of her own, she might be able to bear Jacob's sin and take his consequences
 - This is precisely the role Christ plays for each of us by our faith in His sinless life and sacrificial death

- He is without guilt and shame so He can stand in our place to bear our sin and shame dying in our place on the cross
 - In reality, Rebekah is just saying whatever she must to convince her son to go along with this plan
- So Jacob follows Rebekah's instructions
 - He finds two goats and butchers the animals
 - In the Hebrew text the description of the goats is important
 - Rebekah says bring two choice goats, but the Hebrew word is actually good or pure or right
 - Rebekah prepares the meal, places Esau's clothes on Jacob and attaches small patches of young goat hair to Jacob's arms and neck
 - Jacob must have been a comical sight in this garb as he entered Isaac's tent, but it is absolutely necessary
 - Isaac's eyesight is poor, so he won't be able see who is speaking to him
 - But Rebekah knows Isaac will use his other senses to ensure he is blessing Esau
 - This action of this scene is driven by human senses
 - Taste, feel, smell, sound and the lack of eyesight
 - Isaac is shown relying on his flesh to discern truth and make decisions
 - And noticeably missing is any effort to rely on the Spirit, to hear from the Lord and put aside the flesh
- We could ask why Rebekah doesn't just confront her husband at this moment instead of engaging in this elaborate scheme?
 - First, Rebekah can't tell her husband she was eavesdropping on him
 - That would have been a disrespectful, disgraceful act that would have shifted blame and negated her protests
 - Secondly, as the patriarch Isaac could do what he pleased, so even if Rebekah confronted him, he could dismiss her concerns

- So her only choice is to work a plan behind his back
- Now we should also ask why if Isaac is the patriarch does he feel the need to operate in secret in the first place?
 - Because Isaac knows that Jacob has purchased the birthright
 - If he were to conduct this process in the open, he would have had no choice but to honor the agreement between Esau and Jacob
 - Honor was no small matter in that day, and so Isaac wouldn't have been able to go against the legal sale of the birthright
 - Later, when the truth finally emerged, Isaac would likely be dead or could simply deny knowing about the sale of the birthright
- This brings us right back to where we began
 - A father with a preference for an ungodly son, in defiance of God and his wife
 - A wife forced to counter with a scheming defense of the godly son, hoping to ensure God's preference is honored
 - Look at vs.5-6 again paying attention to the pronouns
 - Isaac spoke his son, Esau; Rebekah spoke to her son, Jacob
 - Isaac is working to obtain a meal with Esau
 - Rebekah is working with Jacob to make that same meal
 - It's like two families at war with one another
 - The saddest thing was that Isaac didn't need to set himself against his wife nor his sons against one another
 - Last week we said that Isaac is the one primarily responsible for the breakdown in his family and we see it here again
 - As father of one godless son and one godly son, Isaac should have invested his time and attention accordingly
 - To the godless son, Isaac should have acknowledged God's choices and mitigated against further damage in the household

- To the godly son, Isaac should have acknowledged God's presence and shielded him from the influence of the ungodly brother
- And Isaac is also responsible for the deteriorating relationship with his wife
 - Isaac was blessed with a woman who hears from God
 - Rebekah is one of the few women in the Old Testament who is shown to receive a word directly from the Lord
 - And yet Isaac shows no regard for Rebekah's revelation or counsel
 - Moreover, Isaac's reason for overriding Rebekah and the Lord was because he favored the taste of the game Esau cooked
 - But as this scene shows, Rebekah knew how to create a convincing substitute using goat
 - So even Isaac's pathetic reason for favoring Esau was pointless
- Isaac doesn't seem to recognize that the woman God has selected for him is a woman capable of meeting his every need
 - When we fail to see our wife (or spouse) as our ally in our spiritual walk, they might start to look like our enemy
 - They are the one standing in the way of what we want
 - They are the one reminding us inconveniently of God's word and God's will
 - Ultimately, they may feel forced to actively work against us, which only increases the problems
 - Isaac and Rebekah are at that point, each parent taking sides, working against one another rather than working together to honor God
 - That's the point of every marriage, ultimately
 - A Christian marriage is a $1 + 1 = 3$ equation
 - A man and a wife united in Christ become a stronger vehicle for glorifying God than either could be alone

- This spiritual multiplication is only true when both the man and the woman are united in a common mission to follow and serve Christ
- We won't always agree, but at the end of every decision is commitment to move as one to the glory of God
- Isaac and Rebekah are like two horses in a tug of war pulling at opposite ends of the same rope
 - There's a lot of tension but they're going nowhere spiritually
 - In the end the stronger horse may win, but at the expense of the weaker one being dragged behind defeated and discouraged
- In this case, both want an opposite outcome, and only one can win
 - Yet it didn't have to be this way
 - God revealed His purposes clearly and when Esau sold his birthright, the matter was settled in accordance with the affairs of men
 - Isaac and Rebekah needed only to acknowledge the obvious and unite in God's will
- Speaking of God, where is God in all this?
 - Is this the way God intended to bring about His will?
 - Is Rebekah's deception God's way of bringing about the prophecy He delivered?
 - Or was the sale of the birthright God's plan?
 - Or would He have done it some other way?
 - The answer to all these questions is yes
 - The story of Isaac and his two sons is ultimately a story of God's sovereignty
 - It began with God choosing the younger son, Jacob, to receive His covenant promises

- In his choice of Jacob, God left Esau to be the godless man he was, which led him to despise his birthright and sell it
- And God was working to ensure that Rebekah would hear Isaac's sinful plan and thwart it through her own sinful deception
 - Did God need their help? No
 - But God is working through their sinful choices to produce His desired outcome
 - God works with sinful men and women because that's all He has
- And yet God is powerful enough to ensure that all that sin ultimately arrives at the right place, according to God's plan
 - God's ability to work through our sin as He does here never becomes an excuse for our sin
 - As if God's ability to make something good out of our sin could somehow lead us to think our sin doesn't offend God
 - And remember, sin still carries consequences that will follow us even as God uses our sin for His purposes
 - He is powerful enough to both turn our sin to good while still disciplining us through sin's consequences
- In this case, God is working through Isaac's stubbornness and Rebekah's deceptiveness to create a good and necessary outcome
 - We remember that this story began with a short mention of Esau's wives
 - He had taken Canaanite wives, which would be a devastating result for God's people should Jacob repeat this mistake
 - If we jump ahead for a moment to the end of this story, look at v.46

Gen. 27:46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

- Rebekah's statement reminds me of a cute story...

One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?"

Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, "Momma, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?"

- Rebekah laments Esau's wives and their negative influence in the family
 - Now we see that these women were the problem, and the entire arrangement was a great disappointment to the family
 - How will God ensure that Jacob will find a wife from among Abraham's family, just as Isaac did?
 - As it turns out, God will use this family dispute to force Jacob to leave the land and find his wife from among Abraham's family
- This is a clear example of God's sovereignty at work in the lives of sinful people
 - While Isaac and Rebekah were struggling in their little family war, God was at work to produce the circumstances to ensure that Jacob finds the right wife
 - And even Jacob's own sin will play a role in that process, but still according to God's desires
 - But because Isaac and Rebekah were absorbed in their own sinful purposes, they missed the chance to see God at work
 - And they each suffered great consequences in the process
 - As I mentioned last week, Rebekah will lose her favored son and Isaac will see his family broken up
- God's sovereignty goes even further in this case
 - Remember in v.9 that Rebecca asked for two choice goats to be killed
 - Why two goats for one simple meal?
 - It seems like overkill, pardon the pun

- The answer is that in this scene God is at work presenting a picture of Christ
- In the Law (which arrived many centuries after this moment), the Lord gave Israel instructions for how to conduct the Day of Atonement
 - This is the day each year when the entire nation of Israel received forgiveness for their sins against God
 - This is a moment of national atonement, when a nation is forgiven according to the Law
 - Individuals within the nation didn't receive their personal saving atonement at this moment
 - Personal atonement and imputed righteousness only comes by faith in the manner of Abraham
 - But the entire nation was bound by the covenant at Sinai and once a year that nation received atonement according to the prescribed manner
- The Lord commands Israel to take two good goats and sacrifice one while laying hands on the other
 - The sacrificed goat was an atonement for uncleanness of Israel while the second goat received the sins of Israel through the laying on of hands and was sent outside the city never to return
 - God calls that second goat the scapegoat, since this is the goat that would bear the sins of the nation and take them away
 - Both these goats are intended to picture the Messiah
 - Christ is both our atoning sacrifice and the One who takes our sins away
 - God used two goats to picture both sides of Christ's redeeming work
- Now in this scene, God uses Isaac as a picture of Christ – not by Isaac's sinful actions but merely his role as the authority figure in the family
 - And Jacob is the embodiment of Israel

- So according to the Law, Israel could only approach the Lord in the tent of meeting after two goats were taken on the day of atonement
- And in this moment, before young Jacob could successfully approach his father Isaac, two goats had to make the way possible
 - One became the sacrifice for the meal while the second becomes the covering to make Jacob acceptable to his father
- Why did Rebekah call for two goats to be killed for the meal? Did she understand the picture she was creating? How could she?
- What a wonderful display of God's sovereignty
 - Everyone involved – Isaac, Esau, Rebekah and Jacob – were operating in sin, trying to scheme their way to a preferred outcome
 - Meanwhile, God was at work in their sin to produce exactly the outcome He desired
 - And even in the smallest details of their sinful choices and decisions, God was at work to make clear He was in charge and He was at work
 - He is sending Jacob out of the land to find the right wife
 - And He's creating a picture of the coming Savior
 - And in the end, He will bring about just consequences for all involved.
- We serve a mighty God
 - Since He gets His way every time anyway, let's resolve to serve Him in obedience instead of testing Him by our sin