

Brothers And The Birthright

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn back to these verses that we read together in the book of Genesis and at chapter 25.

So those of you who were here this morning will know that we looked at how the Lord God brought together Isaac and Rebekah in the most amazing way. Abraham had instructed his servant, go to my country, Mesopotamia, and to my kindred, my family, and take a wife for my son, Isaac. And remember how Abraham's servant and God's providence had been led to Rebekah, the daughter of Beth, you help, the Aramean of Paddan, Aram.

And after the marriage had been arranged, Rebekah was asked the question, will you go with this man? And she said, I will go. And the chapter finished with these words.

Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

[1 : 07] So that's where we left it this morning. And now we're going to look at this section under two simple headings. We see brothers and we see birthright. And we're told here at the beginning of the reading, these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son.

Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean of Paddan, Aram, the sister of Laban, the Aramean to be his wife.

Now usually in scripture, when we read these words, these are the generations of. You have a huge list accompanied by a list of descendants.

But here we're not giving given a list, the names of sons or grandsons of Isaac, for the simple reason that at this point, Isaac was not a father or a grandfather.

He had no children. But these words are there and are placed there to remind us of God's promise. God's covenantal promise to Abraham, which we read in chapter 17 and at verse six.

[2 : 16] God said to him, I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant.

Now almost 20 years have passed since Isaac had taken Rebekah as his wife, yet they had no children.

But Isaac has learned from his parents' mistakes. Remember Abraham and Sarah after 10 years? They took matters into their own hands by obtaining a child through Hagar, the slave leader, they meddled with God's word and they thought that they would do it their way instead of waiting on the Lord.

But here Isaac relied solely on God, for we read in verse 21 that Isaac prayed, and he prayed to the Lord for a wife, for his wife, because she was barren.

[3 : 26] Now Isaac would have prayed for many years, but at last his faith will be rewarded. The Lord has granted his prayer and Rebekah his wife conceived.

The Lord granted his prayer and his wife Rebekah conceived. The Psalm says, this is the doing of the Lord and marvelous in our eyes.

The prayer was answered, but the prayer was answered in God's perfect timing. And even after so many years Isaac did not give up.

Now I'm sure there are those of you here tonight who have prayed maybe for many years, for a situation, for a son that's already been born or a daughter, maybe they're not here, they're far away from the Lord, they don't attend the Lord's house, they don't do the things that you so desperately would want them to do.

And you would love them to love to know that they're in the Lord's care and keeping, because we know that things change so quickly.

[4 : 39] But the Lord is saying persevere and continue, because the Lord and his timing is different from ours and his ways are not always.

So we read here that the pregnancy, although they were happy and blessed, the pregnancy itself was not straight forward for Rebekah, because we read that the children struggled together with him, so she was expecting twins.

So she said, if it is thus, why is this happening to me? Why is there such turmoil in my womb? She was troubled, she was confused.

So she sought the Lord. Remember she had come from a pagan land when she responded to the request to the question, will you go with this man?

And she said, I will go. She had come from a pagan land, but she had now trusted in the God of Abraham and Isaac. Now at this point in their marriage, Isaac and Rebekah were united in the Lord.

[5 : 49] Remember we read at the end of the chapter this morning, he loved him, took her into his tent and he was comforted after the death of his mother Rachel.

So Rebekah inquired, we're not given the circumstances of how she inquired of the Lord, but we're told that the Lord gave her a prophetic word.

Two nations are in your womb, two peoples from within you shall be divided, the one shall be stronger than the other and the older shall serve the younger.

So Rebekah is expecting twins and there's jostling in her womb and that really is pointing to the conflict that would be through off these brothers between them.

And one day God's word would become, bear truth and become true because the younger would overcome.

[6 : 52] Each son's descendants would become a nation of people. Again reminding us of the promise to Abraham, I will make you into nations.

And with all through prophecy, the prophecy comes through. In her days to give birth were completed, behold there were twins in her womb.

The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak. So they called his name Esau. The name Esau means hairy.

Afterwards his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel. So his name was called Jacob. Jacob means hill holder or supplanter. One who takes the place of another.

[7 : 47] So Esau would become the father of the Edomites, which means red. And of course Jacob after his name had been changed to Israel, would become the father of the nation of God's people.

So here we're told that Isaac was 60 years old when his sons were born. That tells us that Abraham was still living at the point of their birth.

Because in Genesis 21 we read, Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And earlier in the chapter 25 if we had read it in verse 7, these are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years.

Abraham breathed his last and died in good old age, an old man and full of years and was gathered to his people. So Isaac was 75 years old when his father Abraham died.

So Abraham's faith was also tested. It was tested when he waited for his son, the son of promise. It was tested when this God said, take your son of promise and sacrifice him to me.

[9 : 06] It was tested then when he saw Isaac being married for 20 years with no son of promise. And how old Abraham would have rejoiced at the birth?

Now we see a significant situation developing between the brothers regarding birthright. Brothers, birthright, verse 27.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man dwelling in tents.

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

And as with their appearance, so their personalities differed greatly. Esau was a wild boy. He loved hunting and outdoor pursuits.

[10 : 11] He was happiest when he was involved in these things while he was impressing his father. Jacob on the other hand was a mummy's boy.

He was content to be at home with his mother. So their conflicting lifestyles and natures reflected on their parents' relationships.

The couple who once were so united were now divided over their sons. Rebecca loved Jacob, but Isaac loved Esau.

Now they probably loved the other son as well, but they favored one over the other. Friends' favoritism in families causes hurt and heartache.

And maybe you're a victim of that tonight. Jildon especially are aware of preferential treatment, and sadly that can lead to jealousy and low self-esteem and insecurity and self-harm.

[11 : 29] But of course this flaw would later resurface in Jacob's own family when he highly favored Joseph over his other sons, a situation of course that would have devastating results.

And if you're a parent tonight, can you ensure that you treat all your children equally? For God doesn't show favoritism.

And neither should we. And we read here that once Jacob was cooking stew and his brother Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted.

He was absolutely exhausted. And he said to Jacob, let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted. Therefore his name was called Edom.

Edom his nickname meant red. So we're used enough to nicknames in our own culture and in our own communities. So red.

[12 : 33] And Jacob now sees the opportunity, said, sell me your birthright right now. Now let's understand what the birthright is first of all.

The birthright was the oldest son's share of the family state. We have it in our own situation. The old eldest maybe has left the croft or the croft house or the house.

And if things aren't done properly, it can cause great strife. So the firstborn son received a double portion in this culture of the inheritance.

And as the firstborn and only just when they were born, only by a split second, Esau was in line to receive two thirds of his father's estate.

Whereas Jacob, who had struggled with his brother in the womb grasping his hill, that's what his name means, a planter to see that would receive only a third.

[13 : 38] Now the sense of injustice would have played on Jacob's mind. Perhaps he had never been told of the promise that God had made to Rebecca, that the elder would serve the younger.

Now whether he knew or not, Jacob decided to take the matter into his own hands. And Esau didn't seem that bothered, to be honest.

And Esau said, verse 32, I am about to die. What use is my birthright to me? He acted scornfully. He thought it was worthless.

And he didn't really value its real importance. But you see here the birthright was very important. Because the birthright included the covenantal blessings of God.

The blessings that God himself had made to Abraham, including the land, including the people, and ultimately including the coming of the Messiah himself.

[14 : 47] So what Esau did was wrong. And it was wrong in God's sight. Because the writer of the Hebrews tells us, in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 15, and he warns us from this account, see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God. That no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble.

And by it many become defiled. See to it that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau.

Who sold his birthright for a single meal, says the Bible. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tear.

Isn't that so sad? But isn't that so true? And it's a message for us. We should not despise our birthright.

[16 : 15] We should not fail to obtain the grace of God by grumbling, by allowing roots of bitterness to spring up and cause trouble in families, in church families.

Friends, this is the biggest problem that's facing the church. Roots of bitterness cause this trouble and by it many become defiled.

And because of us and our behaviour, it's no wonder people don't want to hear and don't want to listen.

And they lose. They fail to obtain the grace of God and people become sexually immoral and unholy like Esau.

And maybe later on like Esau, people might desire to inherit the blessing. But for some it's too late. So he sought it with tears, he found no opportunity to repent.

[17 : 39] God's spirit will not always thrive with man. And maybe tonight this is your opportunity to see the blessings you have in the community here and in this church, to hear God's word preached without a bomb flying off and without persecution.

The persecution is coming but this is a day of opportunity. You see there would come a time when Esau would desire his father's blessing, the blessing of the first born.

And there sadly we witness the complete disintegration of the family. Father against son and son against father and father against son, where Rebecca would ensure that her favourite, Jacob, received Isaac's blessing.

That's later on in the story. And you see the conniving there. But back to this situation now, in verse 33, Jacob said, swear to me right now.

So Esau swore to him and he sold the birthright to Jacob and the transaction was sealed with a solemn and binding oath.

[19 : 01] Then Jacob gave Esau the stew and the bread and he ate and he drank and he rose and he went his way. Then Esau despised his birthright.

He disregarded his inheritance. He sold his birthright for a plate of stew. His birthright for a plate of stew. Judas sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver.

And his life would continue to be blighted, Esau's, with his unwise choices. Later we read that he took to himself pagan wives.

That's what it means in Hebrews when he became sexually immoral and unholy. We read in chapter 26, when Esau was 40 years he took Judith, the daughter of Beery the Hittite, of his wife and Basimoth the daughter of Elan the Hittite, not one but two.

But sadly, this is what we read. And they, these Canaanite wives, they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebecca. The whole thing has just disintegrated.

[20 : 18] The whole thing has become a sham. There's bitterness, there's favoritism, there's strife. It happens in families.

And sadly it happens in the church family. And when it takes a grip, it spreads like wildfire. It made life bitter for Isaac and Rebecca.

How many grandparents, parents are sad because of the way things have gone. And Esau's family suffered as a result of his actions, his carelessness in regard to the things of God.

Have you been guilty of despising your spiritual inheritance? Have you been guilty of scorning the things of God?

If so then repent. Speak the Lord's forgiveness, commit to following Him all the days of your life and treasure His word.

[21 : 24] Ask Jesus to forgive you because He gives us a purpose, because He's given us promises never to leave us nor to forsake us.

As we come to the end of that chapter, I'm just going to read a few verses in conclusion at the beginning of chapter 26. I forgot to put them on the screen.

We read at the beginning of chapter 26, there was a famine in the land besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham.

And Isaac went to Gerah to Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, do not go down to Egypt, dwell in the land of which I tell you.

Now what does that remind us of? It reminds us of Abraham's instructions this morning to his servant, which we looked at and where he said his servant was said to find a bride for Isaac, where he was told, see to it that you do not take my son back there.

[22 : 32] The Lord gives the same instruction here and he reiterates the covenantal promises. So the whole thing is going wrong, yet it's all part of God's plan.

God said while they were still in the womb, there's two nations. The Lord said while they were still in the womb, the older were served the younger.

And now the Lord says in chapter 26 verse 3, sojourn in the land and I will be with you and I will bless you. For to you and your offspring I will give all these lands and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.

I will multiply your offspring as the stars of the heavens and will give to your offspring all these lands and in your offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed, all the nations.

And often think of that in sterling, it's looking around in you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. China, India, the Middle East, the Far East, Africa, Scotland, Lewis, all the nations because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws.

[23 : 55] Disobedience brings blessing my friend, disobedience brings a curse. Now Jacob's behaviour towards his brother cannot be condoned but the Lord would take Jacob and he would mould Jacob into a spiritual leader and the covenant would continue through his line.

So friends, give yourself over to the Lord wholeheartedly to his covenant, live for him, love him, pray to him, honour him and all that you do and think and say, those who honour me, I will honour.

God in his wisdom has given us the ministry of reconciliation, without God we cannot, without us he will not. We are his ambassador, we represent the king but we're made a mess of it.

We have a chance as a church to repent and to reach the lost souls who are going to a lost eternity, even those who might on their deathbed seek repentance and seek the blessing of the birth right in their inheritance but it will be too late.

But we don't know who's at his and we don't know who's at not so we tell everyone, we water and we plant and God will bring the increase if we're obedient to God's call, even though it doesn't make sense and it's uncomfortable, it means going to a city when you want to stay in the country.

[25 : 50] But then you see when you're obedient, God does the rest. Be obedient tonight if he's calling you for the first time, I will go with this man. Be obedient tonight if he's calling you to shake you out of your lethargy, shake you out of your despondency, God is still on his throne, the Lord rules and he reigns and as we are singing in Psalm 85, will you not again restore us?

Will you not again revive us? Show us your covenant mercy, your salvation grant anew so that once again your glory may be seen within our land.

That's it and that's the cry tonight of encouragement despite her failings and her faults, despite her twists and her mistakes.

Let's not judge people, let's encourage and let's move forward together and if we do that God will bless us. He will command a blessing where there is that unity of spirit.

Let us pray. Lord we thank you for this word of encouragement of chastisement, of warning, a word of blessing.

[27 : 09] We pray Lord that you would apply it to all our hearts whatever their situation might be and we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

So can we conclude then by singing in sing Psalm, Psalm 133. How excellent a thing it is how pleasant and how good when brothers dwell in unity and live as brothers should.

That wasn't true for Esau and Jacob, sadly it's not true for many of us. Let's by God's power and grace sing these words from her lips and apply them to her hearts.

How excellent a thing it is how pleasant and how good when brothers dwell in unity and live as brothers should.

All it is like the precious form, pour out from here on set, not running over down this door to rest, yet, upon this spirit, upon its corners spread.

[29 : 08] I thank heavens to you upon the Hill.

For mistos is blessing there, the life that never ends.

We pray now for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to rest and remain with us all.