

Genesis Ch25v19-34 - Family Feuds

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 April 2023

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Tables please to Genesis chapter 25. Genesis chapter 25. We're working our way through Genesis.

It's foundational, not just because it's the first book, but it sets the theme for many of the plots that we come across in the Bible story.

And one of the great characters is Abraham. And we see there even on the heading of chapter 25, Abraham has died. And so the focus of the story now comes to Isaac and to his family.

So we're going to read a little bit about their family this morning and what we can learn from them. So Genesis chapter 25, starting at verse 19 through to the end of the chapter.

This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son, Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel of the Aramean from Paddan Amram, and sister of Laban the Aramean.

[1 : 32] Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.

The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, why is this happening to me? So she went to inquire of the Lord.

The Lord said to her, two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated. One people will be stronger than the older, and the elder will serve the younger.

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment.

So they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So he was named Jacob.

[2 : 42] Isaac was 60 years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a content to stay at home among the tents.

Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau. But Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country famished.

He said to Jacob, quick, let me have some of that red stew. I'm famished. That is why he's also called Edom. Edom means red.

Jacob replied, first sell me your birthright. So look, I'm about to die, Esau said. What good is the birthright to me? But Jacob said, swear to me first.

So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew.

[3 : 57] He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright. Well, keep your Bibles open there, and we're going to pray, and we pray to ask God to help us to learn from his words.

So let's do that now. Father, thank you for families.

Thank you for the family of this church. We gather together because we want to learn from you.

We want to hear from you. So as we focus our attention on this ancient family of Isaac and Rebecca, would you teach us through it?

Would you teach us more about yourself, about us, and how we should respond? Father, bless us, we pray, in Jesus' name.

[5 : 15] Amen. Well, I'm sure you all know the Simpsons, those little yellow characters on the TV program.

They're a bit of a dysfunctional family, aren't they? They're always fighting and falling out. Next door to the Simpsons lives the Flanders.

He's the local pastor with his well-behaved children, a model of perfection. Well, if Isaac and Rebecca had a surname, I don't know what it was, by the way, but if they did have a surname, it wouldn't be Flanders.

It would be the Simpsons. They're quite the family, aren't they? Not the happiest or peaceful of homes. There's tension between the brothers as they squabble and fight.

There's division between the parents. Isaac loves Esau, but Rebecca loves Jacob. And then there's this whole deception as the birthright is sold off for a bowl of stew.

[6 : 31] Now, what should get our attention here is not just how dysfunctional they are, but how central they are to God's plan of salvation.

God had made a promise that through the family of Abraham, a son would come who would bring redemption to the world, a son who was going to bring blessing to all the nations.

So as Abraham dies, we're introduced to Isaac and his family. Verse 19, this is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac and Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebecca. Now, they're not the kind of family that we might choose to carry forward God's plan of salvation.

But as we're going to see, we're shocked, we're surprised at the way in which God works. This isn't our plan and God doesn't do things our way.

[7 : 42] There's much that we can learn about God through this feuding family. We're going to look at three things, our struggle with God, our surprise with God, and our shock with God.

So first, let's look at our struggle with God's ways. Our struggle with God's ways. Isaac marries Rebecca and everything seems in order.

But, verse 21, Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless.

Now, for many couples, those words are especially painful. Isaac and Rebecca longed to hear the pitter-patter of tiny feet.

To hear a little one call out, Mum, Dad. And for those who face this reality, and there are many, it's heartbreaking.

[8 : 51] We struggle because this is what we so desperately want. After all, it's central to married life. It's about building your family.

And for Isaac and Rebecca, well, they are childless. not only that, for Isaac and Rebecca, this was a double struggle.

Remaining childless meant that the promise was in doubt. Remember, it's through the family line of Abraham that God's blessing of salvation would come to the world.

So, if Isaac and Rebecca have no children, then there's no blessing. And if they have no son, then there's no redemption.

And if we do our maths correctly, it's been going on for 20 years. Verse 20 tells us that Isaac was 40 when he got married. Verse 26 tells us that he was 60 when the two boys were born.

[9 : 59] So, 20 years of struggle. Not just pain within the family, but doubting God's goodness, questioning God's plan.

You see, when things don't go as we expect, we struggle. Maybe you plan for a family and it doesn't quite work out the way you expect.

Does God not love me? Perhaps you lose a close friend early in life and we're left wondering, does God not care about me?

You see, we all have our plans for our life, don't we? Each one of us here, we could write it down on a piece of paper. Our dreams, our expectations, and we have it all mapped out from an early age.

I'm going to go to college, I'm going to study this course, then I'm going to travel for a bit and then I'm going to find a partner, a husband, or a wife and we're going to work for three and a half years and then we'll have enough for our mortgage and we're going to buy our house and then we're going to have our 2.7 children and then we're going to retire and then I'm going to be able to do everything I wanted to do and go on all these lovely sun holidays and...

[11 : 23] Well, life rarely goes according to our plans. Health issues arise, an unforeseen move, a loss of income and we sit down and we ask God, what is he doing?

Can I trust God with my life? Well, it would be stupid of me to pretend there's answers to all of these questions.

I certainly don't have them. But what God calls us to do in our struggle is to turn it all into prayer. We cry out to him because that's exactly what Isaac and Rebecca do.

Verse 21, Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer and his wife, Rebecca, became pregnant.

Now, let's be clear here. This does not mean God will give us everything that we ask for. This isn't a quick fix solution to all our wants and desires.

[12 : 39] Remember, Isaac and Rebecca had a central and unique role in God's plan of salvation. Through the family would come a son who was going to bring salvation to the world.

So they begin to pray according to God's promise. We're not told what Isaac prayed, but we can picture him there as he puts his arms around his wife to console her and as they kneel before God morning, noon and night and they cry out to him, Lord, you've promised to bless the nations.

You've promised that a son will come. Please, God, fulfill your promise. In our struggle, keep us faithful. In our doubt, keep us trusting.

Please sustain us. Amen. Well, God has made many promises to us, his redeemed people.

In our struggles, God has promised us that my grace is sufficient for you. In our doubts, God has promised that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

[13 : 59] in our fears, God has promised to care for you and to uphold you. You see, here is encouragement for every one of us in every struggle that we go through.

Here are promises that we can take and we can pray them back to God knowing that he will deliver on his promise. Prayer like this will sustain you.

We can cry out to him Lord, as you have promised, give me your grace. Strengthen my faith. Supply my need.

Pick me up when I fall. Fill me with peace. Prayers like that will sustain you in your struggle.

So first, our struggle with God's ways. Not only is there a struggle, but there is also a surprise at God's choice.

[15 : 11] Surprise. So Rebecca and Isaac gather together, they pray, and God, according to his timing and in his will, provides them with children.

She becomes pregnant. And there is a surprise with the pregnancy. Not that there are two instead of one, but what is going on between the two boys?

Look at verse 22. The babies jostled with each other within her. Now, I've never had the privilege or the experience of being pregnant, but I know babies kick and move and punch and do all kinds of things inside the womb.

But this is something different. It's like a wrestling match is going on inside Rebecca. What are we to make of this surprising pregnancy?

Well, two things. Let's read again from verse 22. The babies jostled with each other and she said, she cries out, why is this happening to me?

[16 : 20] What's going on? What's the meaning? And the Lord said to her, two nations are in your womb and two peoples are within you and they will be separated.

one people will be stronger than the other and the elder will serve the younger. Well, what are we to make of all of this?

Well, first it teaches us about God's gracious choice. Do you see the end of verse 23? the elder will serve the younger.

Well, that's not the way things are meant to go. The tradition was that the older, the first son, was always given priority. The older is always chosen first.

They're the firstborn. They're the one who gets the inheritance. They're the ones that get the blessing. It's just the way it is. Well, guess what?

[17 : 30] God doesn't do tradition. God doesn't follow social norms. In fact, God does things his way, not our way.

God chooses the younger one over the older one. Well, you say, well, there must be a reason for that.

It must be because the older one later in life, he must become the baddie, and, well, the younger one, he must be the goodie. The older one must be kind of a Simpson type, and the younger one turns out to be a Flander, a good guy.

That's how it works, right? Well, not so fast. God works by his grace. The New Testament actually interprets this verse for us in Romans chapter 11.

I have it on the screen here. You can follow with me. It says, Rebecca's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac.

[18 : 37] So, the two boys have the same father, no problem there. Yet, before the twins were born, or had done any good or bad, in order that God's purpose in election might stand, or according to his gracious choice, not by works, but by him who calls, she was told, the older will serve the younger.

You see, God's choice had nothing to do with what Esau and Jacob were like. God didn't make his choice based on how they would live, how they would turn out.

Now, look what it says, before the twins were born, before they had done any good or bad. In other words, it was all by God's gracious intervention, and God's gracious choice.

And it wasn't the kind of eeny, meeny, miny, moe, I'll just pick a name out of the hat and see which one comes out. No, God's choice of Jacob to receive the blessing lies with God and his purposes, and it has nothing to do with Jacob.

It's God who calls us according to his purpose, and it's all by his grace. God's choice.

[20 : 16] In fact, there's another surprise. Not only is it God's gracious choice, but it seems that God's choice is for sinners.

God chooses those who are sinful. Look how these two brothers are contrasted. Look at verse 25. The first to be born came out red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment.

I kind of read that and think, did he come out like a monkey or something or what? No, I just think he had lots of hair, like some kids when they're born just have a big head of hair, don't they? And we might say they're a healthy one, a healthy, full of strength and vitality.

So his name was given Esau, which means hairy. It's pretty obvious, isn't it? After this, verse 26, his brother came out, and his hand was, well, it just wasn't normal.

He was grasping, catching a hold of Esau's heels, so he was named Jacob. What's this unusual grasping all about?

[21 : 30] Well, you might have a little note at the bottom of your Bible. It tells us that, well, Jacob means deceives. He's a grabber.

In fact, as we walk through the passages in Genesis and get to know Jacob a little bit more, his whole life is a broken mess. As the years go by, it seems he gets worse.

He's really not a very nice guy. You wouldn't want him to be in your social networks. God but yet, this is the son. This is the one that God chooses to receive the promised blessing.

Now, I don't know about you, but that gets my back up. It annoys me. People like that should be cursed, not blessed. Good people should be honoured, and bad people should be punished.

doesn't God surprise you? He takes the youngest and the weakest. He takes the one with no strength and no status and blesses them.

[22 : 39] God chooses sinners. But yet, we shouldn't be surprised because that's the big message of all of scripture.

Go with me. Keep your finger in Genesis 25 and jump forward to 1 Corinthians. It's on page 1145.

Page 1145. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and we pick it up in verse 26.

Here Paul is writing to a church, just like us, ordinary people, and he reminds them of why God called them, why God saved them.

Chapter 1, verse 26. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called, when God intervened and saved you. Not many of you were wise by human standards.

[23 : 58] Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

God chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus. If you've got a highlighter, highlight that, verse 30.

it is because of him, not you, because of him that you are in Christ Jesus.

Let's go back to Genesis 25. You see, it's because of God's gracious choice and love and kindness towards sinners that any of us have any hope at all.

[25 : 08] You see, God has no favourites and neither should we. The problem is we do treat each other differently. We treat each other differently within the family of the church.

Or perhaps even like Isaac and Rebecca, parents treat their children differently. Look at verse 27. The boys grew up.

Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country. Kind of the rough and tumble kind of guy. While Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents, Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, oh, he loved Esau.

But Rebecca, no, she loved Jacob. You see, they each had their blind spots. Isaac loved the country boy.

Rebecca loved the home boy. They had their favourites which only fuelled the family division. You see, if Isaac and Rebecca had just grasped and taken a little bit of time to understand God's amazing grace towards them, they would have no favourites.

[26 : 27] They would love their children, all of them, equally. And we would have no favourites either. So, parents, if you have children, please be very, very careful of this.

Your favouritism can destroy your relationship with your children and can wreck your family. Instead, let us all step back and immerse ourselves afresh in God's grace and understand that he loves you in all your mess, in all your brokenness and with all of your sin and he loves you.

And so we should love all the family equally, no favourites. So, our struggle with God's ways, our surprise at God's choice and then our shock over God's response.

Fast forward 20 years, it seems just a normal day. Esau has been out hunting and is hungry. Jacob has been at home and he's been cooking in the kitchen.

But what follows is something quite shocking. First, we see just how desperate these brothers are.

[28 : 05] Their hearts are exposed before us. Verse 30, Esau has come in and he says to his brother Jacob, quick, let me have some of that red stew.

I'm famished. Well, Jacob being Jacob sees the opportunity, doesn't he? Verse 31, first sell me your birthright.

Well, look, I'm about to die, Esau said. What good is the birthright to me? I'm starving. I've been out all day and if I don't get some of that stew, I'm going to pass out here, I'm going to die.

What good is the birthright going to me then? You can have it. Just give me some of your stew. Well, of course, Esau wouldn't have died.

We all know what it's like to listen to kids or even ourselves come in. I'm starving. I'm going to die if I don't have something to eat. No, he wasn't going to die. He was hungry. He wasn't on death's door.

[29 : 10] He was just desperate for something to eat. And Jacob senses the weakness and he closes in. Verse 33, Jacob said, swear to me first.

Let's make a deal. Let's make this legal. Let's sign on the dotted line. So Esau swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

Well, I'm sure Jacob could hardly believe his luck. I mean, it didn't take much persuasion. Just a bit of his lentil stew was enough to get him over the line. seems Esau couldn't be bothered.

In fact, it was much more serious than that. Look at the end of verse 34. Esau despised his birthright.

He turned his back on God's blessing. You see, the birthright was God's blessing. It was a gracious gift from God that only God could give, yet these two brothers show a complete disregard for it.

[30 : 25] Jacob tries to deceive his way into the blessing. Esau, on the other hand, despises and gives up the blessing. Now, before we go pointing fingers at this feuding family, I think we need to turn the mirror around, don't we?

doesn't this just look a little bit like us? Maybe like Jacob, we try to deceive our way into God's blessing.

We'll use any means possible to try and force God's hands to bless us and make things go well for us. We might be making pots of stew, but we can try a bit harder in our prayers and we can do a bit more serving and Lord, have you seen what I've done and you've got to bless me now?

Or perhaps we're like Esau and we despise the blessings that God has already given us. Maybe you've been raised in a home where you've been taught the gospel.

Maybe you're a bit older and you're just coming along week by week and you have the privilege of a good church to support you, but no, you just prefer the temporary comforts of life and you push Christ and his gospel to one side.

[31 : 57] You despise what you have and you decide to go it alone. You see, both these brothers are saying, I don't need God.

I can do it another way. I don't need grace. I'm well able. What's God going to do with these deceiving and despising brothers?

More to the point, what is God going to do with us? Well, God's response is shocking because he doesn't treat us as our sins deserve.

God in response sends a savior. He would send his son, the promised son who would come from a fighting, feuding family like this.

A son would come, not like Jacob, not like Esau, and thankfully not like us, but God's own son, his perfect son.

[33 : 16] You see, the blessings of God could only come through the grace of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is the firstborn over all of creation, the one whose birthright means he owns all things and he rules all things and has power and authority and is supreme.

But yet this son, who being very in nature God, didn't consider equality with God something to be used or grasped for his own advantage.

Instead, he willingly gave up his birthright to enter into this world to serve us. He made himself nothing. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

He died for our deceiving and deception so that we could be forgiven and become heirs and co-heirs with Christ. Jesus took the low position, the humble position.

He became one with no status and no strength so that we might share in his birthright and receive all of his blessings freely.

[34 : 45] Shocking. None of us deserve such grace. But God responds in grace to all of our mess. blessings. He blesses us with his salvation now, today and forever because he loves us. How are we going to experience this grace?

Well, don't be foolish like Jacob and try and deceive your way into God and do all kinds of things to think that somehow you deserve it or you've earned it.

don't be like Esau and be proud and despise what God has given to you. Instead, we humble ourselves.

We bow in surrender. We thank him for his grace. And we go with a view of the world that has no favourites.

[35 : 48] But just as God has shown grace to me, we will show grace to every person, to every sinner, just like you and me. Because God has no favourites and he loves for people to turn to him.

So what can we learn from this feuding family? Well, we may struggle with God's ways, but he's given us prayer to sustain us.

grace to God's grace. We may be surprised at God's choice, but how wonderful that grace is. We may be shocked over God's response, but how thankful we are that he sent his son and has called us to be conduits of his grace to a needy and broken world.

God's love. Let's pray. Father, we might look at this family of Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Esau and point the finger and go, I'm glad I'm not like them.

How wrong we are. Father, thank you for your grace. Thank you for your intervention.

[37 : 32] Thank you for your love. Thank you that you choose sinners such as us. Thank you for Jesus, that he came, giving up his status and his position of privilege, gladly surrendering his birthright that we might gain all his blessings for us.

Father, help us to immerse ourselves daily in your grace. Give us eyes that see people as you see them, that we would not have favourites, but that we would love others as you have loved us.

Help us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. A song we're going to sing, what love could remember no wrongs we have done. That's amazing love that would forgive us.

[38 : 52] Our sins may be many, but his mercy is always more. Let's stand together as we sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 40] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And so we thank you.

[42 : 20] We praise you. Send us with your grace. Fill us with your spirit's power that we might live well as your people this coming week. coming week. May it be for your glory and for our good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Just a reminder, a couple of things. Tea and coffee afterwards. You can catch up with Trevor and Kayla and Rua then. Tonight, I forgot to mention this, tonight at half past six in this hall. There'll be a teaching on the Psalms. So how do we teach or how do we interpret the Psalms?

How do we apply it to our life in our situation? You're welcome to come along to it. It's part of the MBC courses that are offered, but it's one that you can just come to this evening from half past six until half past nine. Yeah, there'll be a break in between. You don't have to say